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THE GROWTH AND INFLUENCE
OF
CLASSICAL GREEK POETRY



THE GROWTH AND INFLUENCE
OF
CLASSICAL GREEK POETRY

LECTURES DELIVERED IN 1892
ON THE PERCY TURNBULL MEMORIAL FOUNDATION
IN THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

By Sir Richard C. Jebb
BY R. C. JEBB, LITT. D., M.P.,
REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK AND FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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1893

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In Memoriam.

PERCY GRAEME TURNBULL

NATUS EST MAII DIE VICESIMO OCTAVO A.D. MDCCCLXXVIII
OBIIT FEBRUARII DUODECIMO A.D. MDCCCLXXXVII.

οἶδα πρὶν ἀνθῆσαι βόδον ὅλλγται, ἐξεμαράνθης,
εἶαρὸς οὔδ' ἐνάτοῦ βηλὸν ἀμειψάμενος·
σοῦ δέ χάριν Μοῦσαις, ὅσακις φάος ἔρχεται ἦρος,
δῶρα παρ' εὔσεβέων προσφέρεται γονέων.

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TO
DANIEL C. GILMAN, LL.D.,
PRESIDENT OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY,
THIS VOLUME,
WHICH OWES ITS EXISTENCE TO HIS FRIENDSHIP,
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE Percy Turnbull Memorial Lectureship of Poetry was established in the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, in 1889, by Mr and Mrs Lawrence Turnbull, in memory of their son, Percy Graeme Turnbull. The first course was given in 1891 by Mr Edmund Clarence Stedman, on 'The Nature and Elements of Poetry'; and was followed, in 1892, by the course contained in this volume.

The lectures are printed as they were delivered, with the exception of a few very slight changes. Their aim is to exhibit concisely but clearly the chief characteristics of the best classical Greek poets, and to illustrate the place of ancient Greece in the general history of poetry. I should like the book to be considered as a member of a series, to which other volumes by other writers will doubtless in the course be added; a series deriving unity from the Turnbull foundation, and associated

with the University whose place among elder sisters is already one of such peculiar distinction.

As these pages will meet the eyes of some among those who heard the lectures given, I may be allowed to renew here the expression of my warm gratitude to that audience at Baltimore whose sympathy, so encouraging at the time, will always be to me one of the brightest of memories.

R. C. JEBB.

CAMBRIDGE,
October, 1893.

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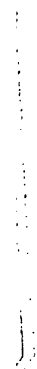
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THE
GROWTH AND INFLUENCE OF
CLASSICAL GREEK POETRY

I

THE DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES OF THE GREEK
RACE AS EXPRESSED BY HOMER

THE literature of Europe begins with the Homeric poems. That very fact tends to obscure our appreciation of them. They are the sources of a stream which has descended to these days, through many channels, indeed, but with a continuous course. We compare the Iliad with the Aeneid or with Paradise Lost; the Greek genius with the Roman, the Celtic, or the Teutonic,—and recognise, in these relations, the qualities distinctive of the Hellene. But no such process can convey an adequate idea of the significance that Homeric poetry possessed for the world in which it first appeared. It is needful also to re-

The Hellenic
mind—a
novel force in
the ancient
world.

member what had been the general tendencies of ancient civilization down to the age in which that poetry took its rise. The Hellenic race, and its first intellectual product, must be seen against this background, before its originality can be fully apprehended.

In the tenth century before Christ, epic composition, of the mature type found in the The pre-hellenic civilisations. Iliad and the Odyssey, had already been developed by the Greeks. No one acquainted with the results of recent criticism will hold, I think, that this date is too early. Let us take the tenth century, then, as an approximate epoch, and consider what was, at that period, the general state of intellectual development in the foremost civilizations of the ancient world. The survey must be brief and slight; but, if we wish to appreciate the Hellenes, a little space may be usefully bestowed on defining these standards of comparison.

When that tenth century opened, the civilization Egypt in the tenth century B.C. of Egypt was, at the least, between two and three thousand years old. The Egyptian state rested upon two closely connected foundations; first, a hierarchy of officials,—at its head, the king, exalted above human rank, Pharaoh, the descendant of the god Ra, and the intercessor between gods and men; secondly, a religion which

dominated every part of life, and in which the central point was the care for the dead. Those mighty monuments, the greatest ever reared by man, with which Egyptian history begins, show these two elements combined. There we see how the king exerted the whole power of the State, all its wealth and all its resources of labour, to make a splendid and indestructible mansion for his corpse,—the everlasting house in which his immortal double, his Ka, should dwell when it had quitted the temporary abodes of the living. Every Egyptian, according to his rank and the means at his disposal, strove for the same object. How intensely real the Ka, the immortal double, was to the Egyptian, may be seen by an example which M. Maspéro has cited. The scribe Qeni was haunted for months by the spirit (Ka) of his wife Onkhari. He had always treated her well while she was in the world, had given her an expensive funeral, and left her a considerable income; yet she was angry with him, and continually returned to disturb him. He could only free himself from the annoyance by threatening her with a legal action. He wrote to her, asking the reason of her posthumous rage, and reminding her of all the affection that he had shown her. ‘Since I became thy husband until this day, what have I done against thee that I should hide?’


What wilt thou do when I am obliged to bear witness as to my treatment of thee, when I appear with thee before the tribunal of Osiris, to plead my own cause before the gods of the West, and thou wilt be judged according to this writing, which will contain my complaints against thee. What wilt thou do?' The roll of papyrus, attached to a wooden statuette of the woman, and placed in the tomb, reached its address; and Onkhari, fearing to be called in judgment before Osiris, ceased to trouble.

Before the close of the sixteenth century B.C.,—so Egyptologists tell us,—everything in the Egyptian cultus had become stereotyped. Every hymn, every temple inscription, had come to be composed after a fixed pattern. The minutest details of ritual had been formulated in writing. A canonical book regulated the daily occupations of the king. Geometry, astronomy, medicine—indeed, all Egyptian knowledge—had been digested into sacred treatises. The very life after death had been mapped out; the priests knew what demons guarded what gates of the other world, and what incantations must be used in each case. Thus the shadow of superstition fell upon the entire existence of the Egyptian. His constant anxiety was to do that which was of good omen, and to avoid the contrary. The priesthood,

with its monopoly of sacred wisdom, grew stronger and stronger. Religion became not only the principal, but almost the sole, concern of the state. The priests controlled the king; at last a priest seized the throne, and a priestly dynasty was founded. Next in importance to the priests, at the epoch roughly marked by the tenth century, were the soldiers. The Egypt of 1000 B.C., it has been said, differed from that of 1500 years earlier as widely as the military empire of the First Napoleon differed from the France of St. Louis. The mental stamina of the people had been enfeebled by the despotism of an all-engrossing ritual. Religion was no longer the mainstay of patriotism, but had usurped the place of patriotism itself. As for literature, it had always in Egypt been restricted to the priesthood and the official class. It had consisted chiefly of religious texts, State records, or biographical memoirs, with some fables or stories. But here, too, the deadening influence of stereotyped formulas had prevailed. The age which saw the birth of Homeric epos found Egypt with her material civilization highly developed, but stricken with intellectual barrenness, and without any vigorous pulse of national existence. The life of the State and of the individual had been crushed by the weight of sacerdotal tradition.


A different form of despotism brooded over the lands of the Euphrates and the Tigris. ^{Babylonia and Assyria.} In the tenth century B.C. two great monarchies there stood side by side. The elder, Babylonia, had been the teacher of the other in religion, in material civilization, in science, art, and literature. The Assyrians were essentially warriors; and their relations to their Babylonian neighbours were, in some points, not unlike those of the Romans to the Greeks. In the religion of Babylonia, on which that of Assyria was founded, a potent element was the fear of evil demons. The world was believed to be full of such malignant beings, ever on the watch for men, as they leave or enter their houses, at their meals, in their hours of rest,—in all their movements and actions. Fancy invested these beings with the most grotesque and horrible shapes that a disordered imagination could conceive; such shapes as might haunt a sick man's troubled dreams, shapes in which the human form was blended with that of animals, or those of animals with each other. Thus the goddess of the gloomy under-world, she whom they called Allat, had a human trunk with a lion's head, and the wings and claws of a bird of prey; each of her hands was armed with a large serpent, which she brandished like a living javelin. The demons, her

servants, were composite monsters of a like kind. The gods of the Babylonian and Assyrian formed a divine army to protect him against such demons, which were ever swarming, invisible, around him ; and, as in an army, each god had his appointed station ; one at the door of the house, another on the roof, another at the table or the bed. The offerings made to the gods were rewards for giving such protection. Yet, vivid as is the sense of the supernatural which such beliefs indicate, there was a wide difference here between Egypt and Babylonia. The Babylonian religion seems to have stopped short at a primitive stage. It never became a paramount influence on the spiritual and intellectual life of the people. Where men are penetrated by the conviction, not only that there is an unending life after death, but that the strict observance of certain precepts can alone secure their happiness in that life, they will yield unlimited obedience to the expounders of such rules. Hence the power of the Egyptian priesthood. But the religion of Babylonia and Assyria did not conceive the life after death with any approach to Egyptian clearness and minuteness. There was a gloomy Hades, a place of torment ; and, for the virtuous, a place of happiness, where the tree of life spreads its branches, and the river of life flows. There was,



however, no doctrinal system which, as in Egypt, furnished the mortal with an accurate chart of the land beyond the grave, and with precise counsel for the preparation of his everlasting mansion. The sciences of astrology and magic were studied by the disciples of Chaldaean lore rather with a view to temporal welfare than with hopes transcending it. The royal astronomers, scanning the heavens from the tower of the Seven Planets, looked for signs presaging the king's victory in war, or his success in some other momentous enterprise; the humble folk, whose traditional lore taught them something as to the language of the stars, consulted it for guidance in daily business or labour. Thus the priests, great as their influence was, never attained to that all-engrossing power which, like the process of petrification creeping over the form of Niobe, had slowly subdued the awe-stricken mind of Egypt. On this side of his existence, the Babylonian, and still more the warlike Assyrian, remained comparatively unfettered. But they, too, bore their yoke. The king of Babylonia and the king of Assyria were masters under whom the life of their subjects was, as the ancient Greeks thought, and as we should think, the life not of free men but of slaves. This thralldom was ordinarily borne, indeed, without complaint, or even with a loyal

satisfaction ; but none the less did it preclude any high development of life, social or intellectual, so far, at least, as the vast majority of the people were concerned. In touching on this subject, it is well to remember that the data for Assyrian life in the seventh century B.C., in Assurbanipal's reign, cannot be assumed to hold good for a period 300 years earlier. Very little is known about the life of Assyria in 1000 B.C. ; but the following statements may, I believe, be accepted. The traditional stores of knowledge, and the means of access to them, were confined, as in Egypt, to priests and officials. The great temples or the royal palaces contained the collections, open to priests and officials only, of brick tablets, stone plates, prisms, and cylinders, on which professional scribes had written the religious hymns, rituals, chronicles, state documents, treatises of astrology and mathematics. The early age of Chaldaea had produced some religious poems showing a real vigour of poetic imagination,—such as the descent of the goddess Ishtar (Astarte) into Hades, in search of the water of life which alone could restore her husband, the slain god Tammuz ; and the epic, if it may be so called, of the hero Isdubar, the lion-slayer, a Chaldaean Heracles. But no such poetical energy or freedom inspired the



literary products of Assyria. The official scribes had no duty more important than to record the deeds of the monarch, the descendant of the god Assur, and the image of godhead upon earth; nor is anything more suggestive, with regard to the level of Assyrian cultivation, than such records of the royal achievements. The great inscription of Tiglathpileser I., about 1120 B.C., is a typical example. In stereotyped phrases, which had come down from generation to generation, the conqueror boasts how he has destroyed hostile strongholds with fire and sword, how he has reduced multitudes to slavery, or put them to some appalling form of torture and death. Such chronicles, with their endless iterations, their dry annalistic manner, varied only by bombast, and their exultation in the most horrible cruelties, help us to conceive the condition of the Assyrians under autocrats who thus decorated the walls of their palaces. The sacerdotal despotism of Egypt, though deadening for the intellect, was at least penetrated by religious ideas; it cannot have been so devoid of everything that avails to comfort or elevate the human spirit as was the royal despotism of Assyria.

Both these benumbing influences had been escaped by the Phoenicians, though their government was probably monarchical, and

The Phoenicians.

their priesthoods, probably hereditary, had great influence. In their career as the earliest traders and colonizers of the Mediterranean,—carrying the wares of the East to other lands, and planting factories or trading settlements where they went,—the Phoenicians showed a spirit of free enterprise unlike any that had yet appeared in the world. But its distinctive character is commercial. It was primarily associated with the pursuit of gain; it aimed at extended dominion as a means to the extension of trade. Phoenicians enlarged the boundaries of geographical knowledge; but that was merely an incident of voyages inspired by other motives than the spirit of exploration. It does not appear that the Phoenicians developed any intellectual activities beyond those—varied enough, doubtless—which were required in the manufacturer, the merchant, and the adventurous pioneer of commerce. Though often regarded by the ancients as great inventors, the Phoenicians do not seem to have possessed much real claim to originality. Their alphabet was probably derived from the Egyptian. The invention of arithmetic, and of systematic weights and measures, must be ascribed to the Babylonians. Glass-making, in which the Phoenicians excelled, was an art borrowed from Egypt. Their skill in embroidery, and

in purple-dyeing, was again a double debt to Babylon. In their religion, the central point was the worship of the Sun, whose spouse was sometimes represented as the Earth, sometimes as the moon-goddess Astarte, the mother of the Tyrian sun-god Melkarth. They refrained from portraying their gods under human forms, but represented them either by symbolic pillars, or by images not of the human type. In his poem, 'The Scholar Gipsy,' Matthew Arnold imagines how the early Hellene appeared to the Phoenician, whose haunts in the eastern Mediterranean he was beginning to invade :—

As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Aegean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes and Chian wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine,
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,
The young light-hearted masters of the waves—
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits, and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

The period at which the Hellenes began gradually to oust the Phoenicians from their trading-stations in the southern Aegean is placed by some as early as the twelfth century B.C., and can hardly have been later than the eleventh. Homer knows Phoenicians in the Aegean only as occasional visitors, the cunning vendors of Oriental wares. The Phoenician left the Aegean to the Hellene, and passed on to found more permanent seats of industry and trade in the western Mediterranean.

But who are these new comers, the Hellenes, and with what qualities do they stand forth against the background of that ancient world at which we have been glancing?


The history of the Hellenes begins, for us, with a series of great migrations. When these movements took place, the country afterwards known as Greece was occupied by a number of Indo-European tribes, akin to each other, but, for the most part, unconscious of the kinship. Such were the Selloi at Dodona and the Graioi on the Oropus. To these tribes the only collective appellation which we can give is that of Hellenes, a modified form of the name borne by the Selloi. These Hellenes, offshoots of the Indo-European stem, had forgotten their

The first appearance of the Hellenes.

own origin, and believed themselves children of the soil on which they lived. For us, indeed, they are such. Collectively, these prehistoric Hellenes represent a civilization which later immigrants found existing in Greece, and partly destroyed, partly assimilated. These later immigrants consisted, in the main, of tribes akin to the Hellenes themselves, though neither they nor the Hellenes knew it. The two earlier streams of immigration entered the Balkan peninsula from east and west respectively. From the east came those who passed through Thrace into the highlands on the further side of the Strymon, and were afterwards known as Macedonians. The Thracian tribes whom they displaced were, like themselves, Aryan, but not in any nearer sense akin to the Hellenes. From the west, moving southward, came other immigrants, who occupied Epeirus, Acarnania, and Aetolia. They displaced the Hellenes there,—of whom the Selloi at Dodona were an isolated survival; and they partly obliterated that old Hellenic civilization which can be dimly traced in the heroic legends of Aetolia. A branch of this north-western immigration passed over into western Peloponnesus, where the settlers in the upper valley of the Peneus came to be known as Eleans, or 'Dalesmen.'

A third movement took its rise in the centre of the Balkan peninsula, from the forests and upland valleys of northern Pindus. Thence came the primitive 'Bocotians,' 'Thessalians,' and 'Dorians.' The Boeotians issued forth into the land afterwards called Thessaly, and thence, under the pressure of their kinsmen, into Boeotia. Both in Thessaly and in Boeotia the immigrants found an old Hellenic civilization. But the Thessalian aristocracy never acquired more than a tinge of it. The Boeotians assimilated it more largely, though not completely. When the Dorians first appear in history, they have already advanced southwards as far as the highlands north of Parnassus, and possess the sanctuary of the old Hellenic god Apollo at Delphi.

Meanwhile the primitive Hellenes, displaced by these manifold forces, had sought other homes. Some had settled in the islands of the Aegean, or on the coasts of Asia Minor. There they came into collision with other tribes of Indo-European descent, which appear under the collective name of Carians, and were for the most part conquered or absorbed. Other Hellenes passed into Peloponnesus. Under these new conditions, the old divisions of the Hellenes into small tribes were lost, and were replaced by larger aggregates,



which may be considered as small nations within the Hellenic nationality, the Aeolian and the Ionian.

It does not fall within my scope to enter upon any detailed discussion as to the origin of the Homeric poems. But I am bound to state the outlines of my belief. I hold that the original nucleus of the *Iliad* was due to a single Achaean poet, living in Thessaly before the immigration which partly displaced the primitive Hellenes there. This primary *Iliad* may have been as old as the eleventh century B.C. It was afterwards brought by Achaean emigrants to Ionia, and there enlarged by successive Ionian poets. The original nucleus of the *Odyssey* was also composed, probably, in Greece proper, before the Dorian conquest of the Peloponnesus; was carried to Ionia by emigrants whom the conquerors drove out; and was there expanded into an epic which blends the local traits of its origin with the spirit of Ionian adventure and Ionian society.

The *Iliad* is, for us, the first articulate utterance of the Hellenic race, and the oldest picture of Hellenic life. Remembering the salient characteristics of ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Phoenicia, let us inquire what are the new tendencies or qualities which the *Iliad* reveals in this new race.

The Hellenic
mind as dis-
closed in the
Iliad.

In the first place,—how foreign to all the sacerdotal traditions of the East is the Hellenic manner of dealing with religion! ^{Religion.}

The Hellenic gods and goddesses are glorified men and women, human in love, hate, and guile, superhuman in power and in beauty; they speak the same language as the human heroes,—noble, yet simple and direct; the poet fearlessly relates, for all to hear who will listen, what these deities say to each other as they feast, or debate, or quarrel, in their Olympian home; when the gods are angry, they are propitiated in the open light of day by all the folk, with dance and song and sacrifice; there is no dark symbolism, no occult ritual; there are no animal forms, no hybrid monsters, representative of dread agencies hostile to man; the hundred-headed Typhon has been vanquished by Zeus, and is a prisoner beneath the earth; Cerberus is merely the watchdog of Hades. Nor is any prominence given to priests as overseers and interpreters of religion. Priests, in the plural number, are mentioned only twice in the *Iliad* (9. 575, 24. 221), and both times with reference to local or special rites. We also hear of Apollo's priest at Chryse in the Troad (*Il.* 1. 37), and at Ismarus in Thrace (*Od.* 9. 198), but he is merely the guardian of the local shrine. Religion

has now its central seat, not in the authoritative lore of a priesthood, not in a close corporation which jealously guards its secrets, but in the free consciousness of the people, who turn for enlightenment only occasionally, at moments of doubt or difficulty, to the soothsayer, the expert in omens. At public sacrifices, the king, as head of the state, takes the foremost part, just as the head of the family does in private worship. The hieratic spirit has given place to the lay spirit. The layman, working as an artist, has asserted the right of the plastic mind over the conception of the deity ; has invested it with the highest beauty that he could imagine ; and has made that series of divine types the perpetual possession of his race. To the priesthood of Egypt, or of Babylonia and Assyria, such a treatment of religion would have seemed an audacious impiety, which robbed sacred lore of its mystery, and thereby of its strongest hold upon the hopes or fears of mankind. Nevertheless, no lay disciple of those priesthoods can have felt a truer reverence for the divine than is manifested by the Greek warrior of the *Iliad* and the Greek wanderer of the *Odyssey*.


Not less striking is the contrast between the type of monarchy which had prevailed in the East and that which is disclosed by Homer. The Ho-

meric poems give less prominence to the extent of the royal power than to the provisions for justice and for reasonable liberty by ^{Government.} which that power is limited. It belongs to the very essence of Homeric kingship that the king is the divinely appointed guardian of those dooms or precedents, *themistes*, on which the rights of his subjects are founded. To give crooked judgments is the mark of a bad king, who will not escape the vengeance of the gods. The king lays business before his council of elders; the public assembly includes all the freemen of the realm. The Asiatic type of monarchy was, like the Hellenic, constitutional. But Aristotle expresses the difference in Greek terms when he describes the Asiatic monarchy as a constitutional tyranny, tolerated by Asiatics because they were, in his phrase, 'more servile by nature;' while he conceives the Greek monarchy as originally a reward conferred upon some signal benefactor of the people, and then continued to the benefactor's descendants. The Greek monarchy of the heroic age is far indeed from that conception of the State which the Greek mind afterwards developed; yet it carries within it the seeds of such a State; the promise of political growth is there, and the spirit of Western civilization.

Thus the Hellenes stand forth, at this early

moment, as already exempt from both the forms of despotism which had benumbed or paralysed human progress in the East. They wear the yoke neither of priests nor of kings.

But, remarkable as this phenomenon is, it does not go far towards illustrating those qualities which made the Hellenes a unique race. The Phoenicians also seem to have reconciled both monarchy and sacerdotalism with a full development of their peculiar energies in new fields of enterprise. The true distinction of the Hellenes is not the mere fact of their escape from deadening agencies ; it is the character, intellectual and moral, to which they owed it. What, then, is this character, as expressed in the first utterance of the race, the Homeric poetry ? We remember the general views of humanity which are exhibited in the sculptures of Egypt and of Assyria. Everywhere we see the king, or some great priest or official, or troops of soldiers, or prisoners, or servants. Man, as seen in those sculptures, either has become superhuman, an image of deified majesty, a sacred and conventional embodiment of imperturbable, pitiless, irresistible power ; or he stands in the presence of his terrible gods, the punctilious and awe-struck ministrant of some exact ritual by which he may hope to propitiate them ; or he is a



nameless figure in a multitude who exist only to do the will of their master, to live and toil for him, or to die. Sublimity there sometimes is in these pictures, and sometimes pathos ; but a rigid prescription governs every portraiture ; humanity is depicted only in certain official and conventional aspects ; and the shadow of the despot or the priest rests upon them all.

Now leave the monuments of the Egyptian temple or the Assyrian palace, and turn to the pages of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. At once we are in the open air, and in the sunshine of a natural life. The human faculties have free play in word and deed. All the movement, all the beauty and the joy of the outward world are observed with a spontaneous freshness of interest and delight. No trammels of rigid tradition check the utterance of human feeling, or silence the thoughts awakened by the known or unknown conditions of mortal destiny. Achilles, with his brilliant prowess, his chivalry, his fervour of wrath and of affection, his fine sensibility to the soothing or strengthening counsels of the gods, and his presage, even when his glory is in the zenith, of a premature death ; Andromache, parting from Hector when he goes forth to battle, and vainly awaiting his return ; Nausicaa playing at

Attitude to-
wards nature
and life.

ball with her maidens, and guiding Odysseus towards the city of her father; Odysseus and Penelope,—these are creations that have held the world ever since with a charm which, so far as we know, they first revealed,—the charm of truth to nature, united with an artistic sense of what is beautiful and pathetic in human life. The Hellene may not have been the first of mankind who felt these things, but he was the first who, feeling them, was able to express them. ‘What a piece of work is a man!’ cries Hamlet; ‘how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!’ This is very much what the Hellene said, and was the first to say, in the ancient world; but, if the words of Hamlet had been indeed Hellenic, they would have tempered this exulting admiration with some reference to the limitations of the human lot. In those clear outlines and gracious forms which Homer gives us, we see already the Homeric sense of measure; and we can perceive how intimately this sense is allied with another characteristic of the race which is also revealed by Homer,—its intellectual fearlessness. From the first, the Greek is resolved to confront the facts of life; be they good or evil, he will not seek refuge

Fearless desire of knowledge.

from them in wilful ignorance, or in mysticism; he will turn his eyes away from no horror and no pain; nor, again, will he suffer them, thus steadily beheld, to depress his activity. The Greek was impelled by a primary law of his nature to know, and in the light of knowledge to estimate what he could or could not do. He possessed, rather as an instinct than as a result of experience, the sense of proportion; and this sense, applied to human life as a whole, produced that abiding consciousness of its narrow limit which is the source of Greek melancholy. When Odysseus meets the wraith of Achilles in the shades, and con-^{Melancholy.}soles him because he is still a prince there, the phantom replies: 'Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, great Odysseus; I would rather be a serf bound to the soil, the hireling of a man with little land or wealth, than bear sway over all the departed.' The true Greek seldom forgot that life is short, and that a mortal must think mortal thoughts.

The language of Homeric poetry is another witness to the mind which shaped it. ^{The Ho-}
Compare Homeric Greek with its elder ^{meric lan-}guage.
sister, the literary language of ancient India, and the difference is significant. Sanskrit has been the more faithful guardian of old sounds and old

forms. The transparency of its structure gives it an unequalled value for students in relation to the whole family of languages to which it belongs. Greek attracts by a different kind of interest. The thought which it suggests is rather, how wonderfully this language has achieved the purposes inherent in its own particular genius. It is an instrument which responds, with happy elasticity, to every demand of the Greek intellect. The forms which it has retained are light, graceful, flexible. It can express the most delicate shades of meaning with the most elegant simplicity; and this power is due, not only to its organic structure, but also to the tact with which words, expressing the same general notion, have been discriminated in its rich vocabulary. The Greek language is the earliest work of art created by the spontaneous working of the Greek mind. If those precious fragments of Greek architecture and sculpture which have survived from later centuries had come down without the credentials of their origin, simply as relics of some otherwise unknown race, it would have been neither rash nor fantastic to affirm that, of all the peoples recorded in history, the only one presumably capable of producing such work in art was the same whose thoughts had moulded and whose spirit had chastened the most perfect among

the forms of human speech. As an organ of poetry, Greek is nowhere seen to greater advantage than in the Homeric epics. And there, as vividly as anywhere, the language bears the stamp of the imagination which has shaped it. The Greek saw the object of his thought directly and clearly. His first aim in language was to make the expression fit the thought. When an imagination of this kind, unclouded by any haze of literary reminiscence, and free from conscious striving after effect, soars into the region of the marvellous or the ideal, it still commands the obedience of the language which it has disciplined in the field of natural observation. Consider, for instance, the preternatural elements in the *Odyssey*. The Oriental art which embodied an abstract conception or a mystic dogma in some hybrid or monstrous animal form was merely making an effort of symbolism. The spectator may comprehend the meaning or accept the doctrine, but he does not believe in the monster. The reader of the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, who feels the persons to be real, is not robbed of his illusion when Circe changes the hero's companions into swine; or when the roasting flesh of the sun-god's oxen bellows on the spits; or when Poseidon petrifies the Phaeacian ship. The human verisimilitude of the whole

disguises the impossibility of the details; we scarcely feel at the moment that they are impossible. But how has this effect been attained? By an imagination which, through habitual contact with what is living and real, has learned to animate fiction also with the breath of life; and which is served here also by a language so faithfully and finely moulded upon nature that, when it clothes a narrative of the miraculous, the very outlines of the garment disarm suspicion as to the form which they invest.

Or consider a still more remarkable achievement in a yet higher sphere,—the evolution of the Homeric Olympus. There was a prehistoric chaos of local cults, in which a host of tribal gods and goddesses competed for each other's prerogatives, with the result that few of such deities possessed a truly distinctive character. The early mythologies had abounded in savage and repulsive traits, such as the story of Chronos swallowing his children. Out of all this confusion and debasement the artistic mind of the Hellenes, as seen in Homer, has brought forth the clear and living types of Olympian godhead, Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Athena, and the rest; each holding a definite province in the government of the world, or a special relation to the energies of

The Homeric pantheon.

mankind ; each, too, a person, of a certain aspect and with certain qualities. These persons are constantly mingling among men ; fighting hand to hand with them,—aiding or thwarting them,—enlightening or deceiving them ; yet they never become less than divine, as the Homeric man never becomes more than human.

The art of sculpture, as applied by Egyptians and Asiatics to divine beings, was still in the rigid bondage of priestly tradition, when these Homeric gods, the earliest masterpieces of a free plastic genius, were delineated by the Greek imagination. The Homeric poetry was, indeed, instinct with the promise of Hellenic art. Such qualities of poetical thought, such forms of language, announced a race from which great artists might be expected to spring. It is true that these Hellenes, whose intellectual growth was already so remarkable, and who had already outstripped other nations in the progress towards a rational life, were still the pupils of the older civilizations in matters of technical skill. The choice ornaments which the Homeric Greek prizes—the finely wrought silver bowls, the silver work-baskets on wheels, the embroidered robes, the necklaces of amber and gold—come to Greeks from Phoenicia or Egypt. If Helbig be right, the

Homeric poetry as a pre-sage of Greek achievement.

general effect of the Homeric house and of Homeric art was rather Oriental than properly Hellenic. A visitor to the palace of Menelaus might have fancied himself at Nineveh in the palace of Sannherib, or at Tyre in the palace of Hiram. The shield of Achilles described in the *Iliad* is certainly, as a whole, the creation of the poet's fancy, indebted for details to Phoenician, Egyptian, and perhaps Assyrian sources. Yet it illustrates the Hellene's feeling for such workmanship. And a surer presage of Greek art is afforded by the sense which we see in Homer of human beauty, not merely in the youthful, but in the aged,—as when Achilles admires the comeliness of Priam,—or even in the dead, as when the Greeks gather round the corpse of Hector. Nor is this the only field in which Homer is unconsciously prophetic of Greek achievement. If the love of beauty is there, so also is the love of knowledge and the love of freedom. In those clear and noble tones which rang out from primitive Ionia with a music never heard before on earth, there was no uncertain promise that in generations to come this people would show the way to mankind in the fearless search for truth; that they would strive towards a conception of society which should reconcile individual rights with the public good; that, wherever a

city of theirs arose, be the surroundings what they might, it would be a witness to reason, and a foe to the enslavement of the human mind; and that, even when they failed, their influence would still make always for the cause of light, and never for the cause of darkness. No other race has had its essential qualities so comprehensively interpreted by its best poetry. How little would the poetical literature of the Romans—even if the poems of Ennius and Lucilius had survived—have sufficed to acquaint us with the gifts of that imperial people whose true genius is read in the monuments of their law, or in those massive works which record their presence throughout the furthest lands to which the Roman eagles were borne! Vergil has set forth the mission of Rome in majestic verse; but how pale is the image which it calls up, compared with that which rises before the traveller from Nismes to Avignon, when a turn of the road reveals the stately aqueduct which Agrippa, the son-in-law of Augustus, threw across the valley of the Gard, or, when on one of the old Roman roads in Britain, we stand in the footsteps of the legions which once held that distant outpost of the Empire! The poetry written in the English tongue is among the chief glories of the English-speaking world; but it is the flower of

their spirit, not the index of their capacity. Of the Greeks, however, it might be truly said that their best poetry, rightly understood, is an index of their capacity,—a special form of their energy in which the other forms are implicit. This was possible, not simply because their genius was more distinctively intellectual than practical, but because those qualities of intellect which made them excellent in poetry were ultimately the same which made them fruitful in other forms of literature, in science, in art, and in political development. The part assigned to them in the drama of the nations was to create forms of beauty, to unfold ideas which should remain operative when the short bloom of their own existence was over, and thus to give a new impulse, a new direction, to the whole current of human life. The prediction which Thucydides puts into the mouth of the Athenian orator has been fulfilled, though not in the sense literally conveyed: ‘Assuredly we shall not be without witnesses,’ says Pericles; ‘there are mighty documents of our power, which shall make us the wonder of this age, and of ages to come.’ He was thinking of those wide-spread settlements which attested the empire of Athens. But the immortal witnesses of his race are of another kind. Like the victims of the war, whose

epitaph he was pronouncing, the Hellenes have their memorial in all lands, graven, not on stone, but in the hearts of mankind.

I have been endeavouring to show how new a force the Greek mind was when it first appeared in the world. The comparison has necessarily been with the types of civilization then dominant,—the Egyptian, the Babylonian and Assyrian, the Phoenician; and these were products of races which did not belong to the Indo-European family. But the separate-ness of the Greek genius is not less remarkable if it be compared with that of other Indo-European races. One illustration may suffice. The great Sanskrit epics, the *Māhābharata* and the *Rāmāyana*, dating from a much later time than the Homeric poems, are not only composed in a language with which Greek, its younger sister, has so many affinities, but they exhibit, in some respects, a general analogy to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Both the Sanskrit epics are of manifold interest, and abound in beauties; they have, in particular, one charm for the modern mind with which Homer cannot compete: they are more romantic. But they are also disfigured by those faults which spring from a defective sense of fitness and of measure; they occasionally lapse into

Distinction
of the Greeks
among Indo-
Europeans.

grotesque conceits, or run into exaggeration ; they are the works of poets who were not sure artists ; and, considered as works of art, they must be placed in a rank altogether below that of the Homeric poems. And as in India, so elsewhere. Both the compass and the harmony of those gifts which were united in the Greek race distinguish it from every other member of the Indo-European family. We are reminded of this in the history of modern art, when some peculiar felicity of invention or of achievement has to be explained by the fact that different strains of blood have been blended, and that consequently several branches of the Indo-European family have contributed to a result which no one of them could have produced alone. For example, perhaps the most signal achievement of France in art has been the creation of Gothic architecture ; and it is pointed out that the region which was the cradle of that architecture, the 'Royal Domain' of central France, is one in which the Celtic blood of the Cymri was blended with the Latin element derived from the Romans, and with the Teutonic element furnished by the Franks. Here, it is said, is the complex source of that Gothic style which blends liberty with self-restraint, audacity with prudence, science with emotion. Or, again,

our notice is drawn to some sharp limitation of the artistic faculty in a race with great gifts for art; as the Italians, for instance, who reached such exquisite skill in Renaissance ornament, failed in the treatment of Gothic detail. Are we not warranted by what we know of Greek work, imperfect though our knowledge is, in saying that no people has yet appeared in the world whose faculty for art, in the largest sense of the term, has been so comprehensive? And there is a further point that may be noted. It has been said that the man of genius sometimes is such in virtue of combining the temperament distinctive of his nation with some gift of his own which is foreign to that temperament; as in Shakespeare the basis is English, and the individual gift a flexibility of spirit which is not normally English. But we cannot apply this remark to the greatest of ancient Greek writers. They present certainly a wide range of individual differences. Yet so distinctive and so potent is the Hellenic nature that, if any two of such writers be compared, however wide the individual differences may be,—as between Aristophanes and Plato, or Pindar and Demosthenes,—such individual differences are less significant than those common characteristics of the Hellenic mind which separate both the men

compared from all who are not Hellenes. If it were possible to trace the process by which the Hellenic race was originally separated from their Aryan kinsfolk, the physiological basis of their qualities might perhaps be traced in the mingling of different tribal ingredients. As it is, there is no clue to these secrets of nature's alchemy: the Hellenes appear in the dawn of their history with that unique temperament already distinct: we can point only to one cause, and that a subordinate cause, which must have aided its development, namely the geographical position of Greece. No people of the ancient world were so fortunately placed. Nowhere are the aspects of external nature more beautiful, more varied, more stimulating to the energies of body and mind. A climate which, within three parallels of latitude, nourishes the beeches of Pindus and the palms of the Cyclades; mountain-barriers which at once created a framework for the growth of local federations, and encouraged a sturdy spirit of freedom; coasts abounding in natural harbours; a sea dotted with islands, and notable for the regularity of its wind-currents; ready access alike to Asia and to the western Mediterranean,—these were circumstances happily congenial to the inborn faculties of the

Influence of
land and
climate on
Greek de-
velopment.

Greek race, and admirably fitted to expand them.

Such was the favoured land which saw the beginnings of Western civilization. To show how the development of Greek poetry kept pace with Greek life will be the aim of the succeeding lectures in this course.

II

GREEK EPIC POETRY

EPIC poetry was the earliest, of a finished form, which the Greeks created; and it had existed for a long period before any other species was developed. No example of lyric poetry (using that term to include elegiac and iambic) is on record, which can be referred to an earlier date than about 700 B.C. The name 'epic' itself, as the Greeks of the classical age understood it, was defined only by its differences from lyric and dramatic. As distinguished from lyric, it meant poetry which was recited, not sung to music; as distinguished from dramatic, poetry which merely narrated. The oldest epics were composed in the hexameter measure; but the term 'epic' implied nothing as to metre. The oldest and greatest examples of such poetry dealt with legends concerning heroes; though this again is not contained in the definition. Hence these two traits came to be generally associated with

The Greek
definition of
Epic.

the term 'epic.' It was understood to mean a poem which narrated heroic action in hexameter verse. But, even in the earliest age of Greece, poems were composed in the epic form which were not on heroic themes. Thus Hesiod's 'Works and Days,' and his 'Theogony,' must be classed as epic; though the former poem has nothing to do with the heroes, and the latter is concerned only with their genealogy. Hesiod and his school used the epic form because it was the only one available for their purpose; and they applied it to any theme which they desired to treat. Hence, for moderns who seek to trace the growth of Greek poetry, and to see how it gave utterance to successive phases of the Greek mind, this term 'epic' is inconveniently large; it requires to be defined by a further distinction. The Greeks were content to discriminate their great classes of poetry by external form alone, because the form was regarded as a law (*θεσμός*) implying certain rules of style and treatment, whatever the subject might be. Hesiod, in the epic form, observes these precepts, after his own fashion, though that fashion is not Homeric: and the Greeks, their artistic sense being so far satisfied, did not feel that it was confusing to class Homer and Hesiod together as epic poets. This was made still easier for them

by their way of looking at all poets as teachers: Hesiod is directly a teacher; and they regarded Homer as a teacher also.

The relation of Homer to the development of Greek poetry is, however, totally different from that of Hesiod; and this is the point on which we must fix our attention here. The highest excellence of Greek epos, as Homer reveals it, is inseparable from the nature of the Homeric subject-matter; it was necessary to this highest excellence that the theme should have an ideal greatness, and that it should be an organic whole. Only then was it possible for the Greek mind to show the best that it could do in this kind. Homeric epos marks one of the summits of Greek achievement. When we think of the Greek epic as a chapter in the evolution of Greek poetry, we must think of it as represented by the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Further: objection is sometimes made to the view of the Greek epic period as preceding the lyric and as clearly marked off from it, on the ground that, long after lyric poetry had come into existence, epic poetry continued to be written. Here, again, we must distinguish. It is true that between 700 and 400

The highest form of Greek epos is the Homeric.

Relation of the epic period to the lyric.

B.C. we meet with the names of several epic poets, whose works are now represented only by meagre fragments; such as Asius, Peisander, Panyassis, Antimachus, Choerilus. But these, without exception, are representatives of what, in contradistinction to the Homeric and genuine Hesiodic work, must be called literary epos. These men did not continue the natural life of Greek epos; they were imitators of the great models left by an earlier age. Then comes the Alexandrian period, with its artificial heroic epos, such as that of Apollonius Rhodius; or its didactic epos, like that of Aratus and Nicander: after which the annals of Greek epos have nothing better to show than Oppian, Quintus Smyrnacus, and Nonnus. As to the old Cyclic poems, the more considerable among them did not overlap the lyric period, but came before it.

Clearly, then, the known facts warrant the view that the Greek epic period should be regarded as having closed before the lyric opened. The true epic poetry of Greece had finished its course before the earliest lyric strains were heard. The epos which came later had the form without the soul; it was not characteristic of the Greek genius in this kind.


In striving to imagine the early days of Greek

epic poetry we naturally turn to those scenes of the Odyssey where the ancient Greek poet introduces the ancient Greek minstrel. Such passages are at least far nearer in time and spirit than anything else now extant to the days when minstrels sang in the halls of Achæan chiefs ; and they are full of suggestion. The suitors of Penelope, holding their insolent revels in the house of the absent Odysseus, compel the minstrel Phemius to sing to them after their feasting. A servant places a lyre in the minstrel's hands ; and the lay which Phemius selects to sing concerns the return of the Achæans from the war at Troy, when Athena vexed them with sore troubles on their homeward voyage. The revellers sit listening in silence. Meanwhile Penelope, who is in an upper room of the house, hears the strain ; she descends the stairs, with two of her handmaids, and standing near the entrance of the hall, with her veil drawn over her face, speaks amidst her tears to the minstrel. 'Thou knowest many other charms for mortals, deeds of gods and men,' she says ; 'I pray thee, change this piteous strain, which consumes my heart within me.' Her son Telemachus gently reproves her. 'Why dost thou grudge that the sweet minstrel should gladden us as his spirit moves him ? When minstrels sing

The Greek
minstrel. —
Scenes in the
Odyssey.

of woeful themes, it is not their fault ; it is the fault of Zeus, who sends the woes. This minstrel is not blameworthy for singing of the evil doom of the Danaoi ; he has chosen the newest theme, which will please most.' So Penelope goes back silently to her chamber, and weeps for Odysseus, till Athena sends sleep upon her eyelids.

The other scene takes place in the palace of Alcinous, the king of Phaeacia. Odysseus has been shipwrecked, and is now the guest of the king, who does not know who he is. The hall is thronged with Phaeacians, old and young ; there has been a sacrifice, and now there is to be a feast. The 'herald,' or chamberlain, of the king leads in the blind minstrel Demodocus, places him in the midst of the guests, on a high chair inlaid with silver ; suspends the lyre on a pin, fixed in a pillar behind the chair ; and guides the blind man's hands so that he shall know where to find it ; then places a table beside him, with a basket of bread, and a goblet of wine. The feast being over, Demodocus is stirred by the Muse to sing the deeds of famous men (*κλέα ἀνδρῶν*) ; and his theme is a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, —a lay 'of which the fame had reached the wide heaven.' Odysseus, sitting unknown among the guests, draws his purple cloak over his face to hide



his emotion. When the minstrel paused in his song, and the other guests were applauding or talking, Odysseus would stealthily wipe away his tears; but his royal host perceived it, and presently proposed that the company should go out to see athletic games. So the chamberlain hangs up the lyre again, and guides the minstrel out of the hall. Once again Alcinous makes a banquet for his guest, and again Demodocus is summoned. Odysseus sends the minstrel a mess of boar's flesh as a special honour, and, with praise of his former singing, asks him to give them a particular lay about the making of the wooden horse, in which the Greek heroes were hidden, and by means of which they took Troy. The minstrel obeys; and again Odysseus is strongly moved by the strain. In this instance, we note an interesting phrase: it is said that the minstrel, on hearing the request of Odysseus, 'took up the tale from that point,'—that point, namely, in some longer lay concerning Troy.

Nor is it only in these memorable passages that the *Odyssey* refers to the art of the minstrel. The swineherd Eumaeus, eager to make Penelope understand the charm of the newly arrived stranger (Odysseus), has recourse to a simile: 'Even as when a man gazes on a minstrel, whom the gods

have taught to sing words of yearning joy to mortals, and they have a ceaseless desire to hear him, so long as he will sing,—even so he charmed me, sitting by me in the halls.’

Thus the minstrel appears in the *Odyssey* as a singer whom men believe to be directly moved by the gods or by the Muse; he sings in the halls of chieftains, accompanying his song with the lyre; and his song is ordinarily a lay of moderate compass, dealing with some episode complete in itself, such as the making of the wooden horse, taken from a larger story, such as the tale of Troy. But there are two points above all others that deserve notice. The first is the rapt attention with which the audience listens,—the The Greek minstrel's power. strong power of the minstrel over their emotions. This entirely agrees with the vivid picture of the effects produced, in a later age (*cir.* 400—350 B.C.), by the Homeric rhapsode, as described in Plato's *Ion*. His themes. The other point is the phrase used to denote the general class of themes handled by the minstrels,—the deeds of heroes, *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*. It is the same used in the *Iliad* to describe the subjects which Achilles sang to the lyre, for his own pleasure and that of Patroclus, in his hut at Troy.

In this phrase itself, however, there is nothing

distinctive. The early age of almost every people can show forms of folk-lore and folk-song which could be described as the deeds of famous men, the legendary heroes of the race. The question is, What was distinctive in the Greek conception here, separating it from the conceptions formed by other races?

The early legends of a people commonly blend mythology with reminiscences more or less historical; but the proportions which the two elements bear to each other vary indefinitely in different cases. Sometimes mythology is paramount; the national saga serves mainly to preserve weird images of the supernatural, fantastic creations of a primitive fancy, which have fascinated the childhood of the race, and have continued to haunt its mind. As an instance, one might take


The Nibel-
ungenlied.

the earlier shape of the story on which the German *Nibelungenlied* was founded, — a story once common to the whole Teutonic stock. In the *Nibelungenlied* itself, no doubt, the mythological element has dwindled before the ethical, and history, though in a fantastic disguise, has contributed the persons of Attila and Theodoric. But the older Norse version of the story still moves in a world where daemonic and magical agencies reign supreme; Brunhild is a valkyria, and Sigurd can metamorphose himself; the nominally human

persons scarcely pertain to real humanity. Or such early folk-song may be directly based on definite historical events, and ^{Early English war-poems.} adhere pretty closely to facts; thus the early war-poems of England in the tenth century, such as the 'Battle Song of Brunanbuhr' and the 'Song of the Fight at Maldon,' concern the real struggles against the Danes. And between these two poles there is an intermediate region, a class of legends in which the basis is historical, but in which a free fancy has given a new complexion to the facts, altering, shifting, combining them, mingling them with alloy, old or new, at its pleasure. This is what has happened, for example, in some of the early French ^{French romances of chivalry:} romances of chivalry, the so-called 'Chansons de Geste.' The great German Karl has become the French Charlemagne, with his capital at Paris instead of Aachen; he goes on crusades, and leads his armies against Jerusalem or Constantinople. But, amidst all these fantasies and impossibilities, the romances preserve the fundamental fact that there was a time when a single emperor ruled over western Europe from the Eider to the Ebro. And the same thing holds good of minor persons; thus the Roland of the romance is killed fighting against Saracens in the

Pyrenees; and there was a real knight named Roland, who was indeed killed in Pyrenaean warfare, though his foes were the Gascons. Now the Iliad and the Odyssey are evidently more nearly analogous to the French romances of chivalry than to the primitive form of the Nibelungen lay, or to the early war-poetry of England. What exact measure of historical fact the Iliad contains, we cannot say: the analogy of the Carolingian romance would suggest that some Achaean king may once have held a dominion as extensive as that of Agamemnon, and that there were struggles in the Troad of the kind which the Iliad describes; inferences which are probable on grounds independent of such analogy. On the other hand, the supernatural agency is an organic part of the Iliad; the Homeric Achilles slays Hector with the aid of Athena; we are not logically justified in eliminating Athena, and still affirming as a fact that a Greek hero named Achilles slew a Trojan hero named Hector.

The essential difference between the French romances, considered as legends typical of a class, and the Homeric epics is this. In the French romances, widely as they depart from historical truth, the main interest is afforded by imagination



playing around history. The series of exploits constitutes the principal charm. These achievements, which the French poets and hearers ascribed to ancestors of their own, form the pith of the romances ; the characters of the great men who do them, as, for instance, that of the poetical Charlemagne, however interesting, are of subordinate interest. Now, in the Homeric epics, the deeds of prowess ascribed to the legendary ancestors of noble Greek houses or clans were indeed sources of deep interest and pride to their descendants ; so, too, were the achievements of the Greek army, as a whole, against the Trojans. But the inmost secret of the spell exerted by Homeric epos does not reside in such sentiments. The supreme and distinctive work of the Homeric poet was to body forth those human types in which the Hellenic race recognised its own ideals, and in contemplating which it became conscious of itself. Not the successes won by Achilles, but Achilles himself,—not the adventures of Odysseus, but Odysseus himself,—made the Iliad and the Odyssey all that they were to the Greeks. The same remark applies to the minor human types in each epic, and, in the Olympian sphere, to the divine types ; but it is in the central person of either poem that it is most significant.

The human
types in Ho-
meric poetry.

Achilles is a young warrior of transcendent physical beauty and unequalled prowess; Achilles. he is further characterised by the most vehement emotions, curbed with difficulty by strong self-command; he is a masterly orator, in whose speaking the most fiery passion is combined with the keenest power of sarcasm and the utmost force of argument; he is also in sympathy with the gentler graces of human life; the delight of his leisure in the camp is to sing the glories of heroes to the lyre; his tact and his courtesy are pre-eminent; he is chivalrous and tender towards the afflicted and the helpless. And he has also a peculiar pathos. Two fates, as his divine mother told him, were open to his choice; he might remain in Greece, and live to old age, but at the cost of missing renown; or he might come to the war at Troy and win renown, but at the cost of dying young. And before the Iliad opens, his choice has been made. The presage of an early doom hovers above him, flitting now and again like a cloud across the brilliant morning of his life; he knows it, and he does not complain. Modern readers, even students of the classics, have too often taken their idea of the Homeric Achilles from the misleading summary of his character by Horace: 'Let him deny that laws were made for him, and acknow-

ledge no umpire but the sword.' The very keynote in the character of the Homeric Achilles is his burning indignation at a wrong, at a gross breach of justice; he does not represent the sword as against right, but right as against tyranny. This is perfectly marked at the beginning of the Iliad, when Achilles first appears. Apollo is plaguing the Greeks because his priest has been wronged by Agamemnon. When the pestilence has been raging for nine days, it is Achilles who summons the Greeks to the assembly. He then addresses Agamemnon, and proposes that they shall ask some soothsayer *why* Apollo is wroth. On this hint, without waiting for Agamemnon's invitation, the seer Calchas at once rises, and says that he can reveal the cause, if Achilles will promise to protect him from the anger of a great chief; he does not say who it is. Achilles, rising again, bids Calchas speak fearlessly; no one shall lay a finger on him,—no, not Agamemnon himself. Thus Achilles—who, as yet, has suffered no personal injury, and is acting solely for the common good—stands forth at the outset of the epic as the one chieftain who dares to uphold the public interest, and, in so doing, to brave his suzerain's anger. In the debate which follows, he appears to no less advantage. Calchas declares that Apollo's wrath will not cease until

the daughter of Chryses is restored by Agamemnon. The king does not refuse to restore her, but at once demands compensation. Achilles replies that the Greeks have no common stock of property in the camp from which such compensation can be made ; the king must wait till Troy has been taken. Agamemnon then makes a most unwarrantable speech ; he taxes Achilles with evasion, and declares that, if the Greeks do not provide compensation, he will take it by force. Achilles, thoroughly incensed, and with good cause, denounces him as shamelessly selfish ; they are all fighting at Troy in the cause of his family ; he himself has the foremost place ; yet he actually threatens to despoil his followers. 'And now,' Achilles ends, 'I will go back to Phthia ; that is better than to stay here amassing wealth for thee.' These words are the signal for a torrent of insults from Agamemnon ; let Achilles go,—his anger is of no account ; nay, the bride of Achilles shall replace the daughter of Chryses, that Achilles may learn to know the power of his chief, and may be a warning to others.

Thus Agamemnon has put himself completely in the wrong : a chivalrous warrior, as Achilles is, might reasonably decline to serve under such a leader,—so violent, so ungrateful, so contemptuous of all reason and fairness, so outrageous in be-

haviour towards comrades who are risking everything for the sake of him and his. It is an essential feature of the Iliad that, though Achilles exceeds measure in the persistence of his resentment, his resentment is, in its origin, perfectly justified. His turbulent emotions are so prominent in the poem that it is all the more needful to observe the restraint which is placed upon them at supreme moments. One such moment occurs after the contumelious speech of Agamemnon just noticed; and there the act of self-restraint is beautifully imaged as obedience to the whisper of a guardian goddess. Achilles is moved to slay Agamemnon on the spot; he is actually drawing his sword from the scabbard, when Athena comes to him from heaven; she glides behind him, and as he is on the point of darting forward, catches him by his auburn hair; he turns round, and recognizes her; there is an awful divine light in her eyes, but she is invisible to all except himself: she tells him that Hera has sent her, in good will to him and to Agamemnon; he may *rebuke* the king, but he must not draw sword: and then she departs to Olympus. Another such moment is in that noble and touching scene, when Priam comes by night to the Greek camp, to ransom the body of his son Hector from Achilles. He enters the

young hero's hut unnoticed, and in a moment is at his feet, clasping his knees and kissing his hands; and then he makes his prayer to the young conqueror, asking him to think of his father Peleus, who may have troubles in his old age, but is sustained by the hope of seeing Achilles again. He ends with those famous words, unmatched for simple and noble pathos: 'I have borne such things as no man on the earth hath ever borne,—to lift to my lips the hand of the man who hath slain my son.' Achilles raises the old man from the ground, and places him in a seat, but makes no sign of granting his prayer; and then Priam reiterates it. Thereupon Achilles breaks forth: 'Chafe me no more.....I myself am minded to give Hector back to thee.....Stir my heart no more amidst my troubles, lest I keep not my hands even from thee, though thou art my suppliant, and transgress the commandment of Zeus.' Then he rushes 'like a lion' out of the hut, and gives his orders as to making the corpse of Hector ready for Priam to take home. That dread of his lest he should slay his aged and helpless guest is the measure of the bitter and terrible struggle in his soul. His grief and rage for the death of his friend are unabated; he feels intensely that, even now, the ransoming of Hector's corpse may

be a dishonour to the memory of Patroclus. But he also knows that Zeus commands him to accept the ransom; and he feels a deep compassion for Priam. That cry of his, 'Chafe me no more,' marks the extremity of the tension; he can master himself; but he must be let alone to do his hard duty in the light of his own thoughts.

It is well to remember these aspects of Achilles; to notice that there is more in him than the brilliancy of the warrior, on whom the panoply made by Hephaestus flashes 'like the gleam of blazing fire, or of the sun as it arises;' more, too, than his tempestuous passion, or his splendid efficiency alike in action and in speech; there is also that intrepid championship of the public good, that burning zeal against high-handed oppression, that fount of chivalrous compassion, and, not least, that sense open to the admonitions or behests of the gods, compelling him to hold his own fiercest impulses in check, even when they are straining in the leash, and he mistrusts his own power to control them. This Homeric Achilles is a type in which the Hellenic age which gave birth to it saw its own ideal of a glorious manhood to which the freshness of youth still remained,—manhood with all its energies of body and soul in radiant vigour; tinged, also, with that characteristically Greek

melancholy which springs from a sober recognition of a limit to the human lot, and sets a boundary to hope, though without inducing either apathy or complaint. There is one respect, indeed, in which the Homeric Achilles might seem to contravene an instinct of the Greek nature: is he not deficient in the sense of measure? When he spurns the envoys of Agamemnon, though they offer the amplest reparation, and refuses to forego his wrath until the Greeks shall have been reduced to extremities, he certainly violates the Greek conception of what is fitting in mortal men. He acts more like one who is possessed by Atè,—so the Greeks of the fifth century would have felt,—and exposes himself to the jealous anger of the gods. But we must remember that this youthful warrior belongs to the youth of the race that conceived him. In him they expressed their ideal of splendid and many-sided force; in him, too, they saw such an equipoise of faculties as their artistic instinct required in typical manhood: his body has not been developed at the expense of his mind; he is a great warrior, but also a great orator; he can touch the lyre no less than wield the sword. And in this aspect he expresses the Greek sense of measure: he is a harmoniously developed human being. On the moral side, that sense of measure

is again represented by his acts of self-mastery—as in the scenes with Agamemnon and Priam. That his feelings are, in themselves, violent and excessive, results from the effort of poetry, in a simple and vigorous age, to express human nature in its highest intensity; Achilles must be peerless in action; he must be unique also in vehemence of emotion,—of anger, and of love.

Odysseus also is an ideal type; but he is not lifted above ordinary emulation in the same degree as that dazzling embodiment of youthful force and beauty which is pre-^{Odysseus.}sented by the son of Peleus. Horace, who scarcely appreciates the Homeric Achilles, is more felicitous when he describes Odysseus as an instructive pattern of what can be done by manliness and wisdom. This hits the point,—that the Greeks saw in Odysseus no unapproachable hero, but the great exemplar of certain qualities which every one might cultivate. Greek poetry, with its usual tact, does not make Odysseus young. He is a middle-aged man of the world. His most prominent trait is the quick-witted versatility which can deal with every fresh difficulty as it arises. His intellectual power often gives him, too, a large measure of foresight. But the Homeric Odysseus, be it observed, is not invariably prudent. Sometimes, when the most


deadly danger is imminent, he fails in common prudence, through too much curiosity, or through a spirit too sanguine or too audacious, which leads him to tempt fate. Take, for instance, his adventure in the cave of the Cyclops. When he and his comrades reach the cave, Polyphemus is absent. The comrades propose that they should take the cheeses, the kids, and the lambs, and make off to their ship. But no, Odysseus is bent on seeing Polyphemus, and, oddly enough, professes to think that the master of the cave may prove hospitable. So there they stay, eating the cheeses of the Cyclops, till he returns; when Odysseus speaks, and, with a certain effrontery, expresses a hope that he and his party, thirteen in number, may receive entertainment. On being asked where he has left his ship, he answers with the ready falsehood that it has been wrecked. The Cyclops, with an indignation not wholly unwarrantable, replies, not in words, but by cooking two of the companions for his evening meal; and all the troubles begin. Not content with having brought his friends to this pass, Odysseus, when at last he puts to sea with the six survivors, must needs shout back a defiance to the giant, who replies by breaking off the top of a mountain, and throwing it at the ship, which it narrowly misses. But even this is not enough.

When they have got a little further, Odysseus shows signs of wishing to hail the Cyclops again, and his comrades implore him to be silent. 'Fool-hardy that thou art, why wouldst thou rouse the savage to wrath?' 'But,' says Odysseus in telling the story, 'they prevailed not on my lordly spirit.' And so he shouts again to Polyphemus: 'Cyclops, if any shall ask thee who put out thine eye, say that it was Odysseus, the waster of cities, son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca.' This leads to a short dialogue, the end of which is that the Cyclops hurls a huger crag than before, which grazes their rudder. Another instance of his rashness is when he forgets one of Circe's express warnings, as they are nearing Scylla, and stands full armed at the prow of his ship, attracting her notice by his defiance.

This occasional excess of daring is an important trait in the Homeric Odysseus; it distinguishes him from the cold, cautious, even mean-souled Odysseus of later writers. His true distinction, in the *Odyssey*, is that he has wit enough to extricate himself from any difficulty, and fortitude enough to bear whatever the gods send. He is sometimes found in situations trying to heroic grandeur, as when the ram conveys him out of the cave, or when he clings 'like a bat' to the wild fig-

tree above Charybdis; who can imagine Achilles in such positions? But even then he is heroic, with the heroism of supreme ingenuity. And his companions supply the measure of his superiority to commonplace men. The only thing in which they ever have the better of him is commonplace caution, and then it merely serves to bring out his advantage in intellect. He never yields to merely sensuous temptation, and he never defies the known will of the gods, as his companions do when they eat the oxen of the sun-god in Thrinacia. But strong as he is, he is in no way raised above human infirmity. The song of the Sirens woos mortals to the isle where all knowledge shall be theirs,—knowledge of what has been, and of what shall be hereafter upon the earth. The finer the spiritual ear, the more perilous the allurements of that promise; and Odysseus endures a harder ordeal than his grosser comrades, whose labour is needed to row the ship swiftly past that shore, and whose ears are meanwhile sealed with wax against the sounds which, for them, would have had less meaning. But he, lashed to the mast, must listen to that song; and his own will would have been too weak, if more than human counsel had not warned him beforehand that he must place himself out of his own power, until those sounds die away over the sea.

That home which he sought through so many wanderings and trials was the true centre of his affections. The unwilling guest of Calypso in the far west, he yearned for the day when he might see were it but the smoke rising from his own land. 'There is nothing better or nobler,' he says to the maiden Nausicaa, 'than when man and wife are of one heart and mind in a house.' And when at last he reaches Ithaca, and when, still in his disguise, he converses with Penelope, how touching is the anxiety to guard her against too sudden a shock of joy, which appears in his manner of gently preparing her mind for the announcement that her husband has returned. He pretends to be a Cretan, a certain Aethon, who has known Odysseus ; yes, and he has heard on good authority that Odysseus is safe—that he is in Thesprotia—nay, that he will soon be in Ithaca : and he can say even more,—he can solemnly assure her, as his conviction, that she will soon recover him : 'In the same year Odysseus shall come home, as the old moon wanes and the new is born.' To the last, he has his moments of despondency. As he lies sleepless in the porch of his own house, on the rude couch allotted to him as a poor and unknown stranger, he muses how he can ever prevail against the suitors,—one man against so many ; he chides



his own misgivings; but he cannot allay them. Then Athena comes to him from heaven, stands above him, and comforts him: 'O hard of belief! Many can trust in a weaker friend than I am,—in a mortal friend; but I am divine, and I preserve thee to the end.' Such is the Homeric Odysseus; no superhuman paragon, but an able, nimble-witted, brave, patient man, who fights or devises his way through many trials, not without lapses from prudence, not without experience of discouragement, but with a sound brain and a warm heart, and, thanks to the gods, with final success.

Such clear human types as these, instinct with the very essence of the Greek spirit, give to the Homeric epics that living and abiding human interest—first of all for the Greeks themselves, and then for people of every race and age—which distinguishes them from all other poems of war or adventure, how rich soever in the splendour of battle or the charm of wonderland. Here is the

The form of
Homeric
poetry.

indwelling principle of life in the Homeric poetry; but it is a harder thing to describe the characteristics of the form in which that soul is clothed. If one should say, 'Read the Iliad and the Odyssey, or parts of them, in the original; that is the only way to obtain any adequate sense of their distinction in respect to

form,' he might seem to be evading his task ; and yet that is strictly true ; true, not only as it is, more or less, of all great poetry, but in a special degree. Translation, even the best, though it be the work of a poet, will not help far ; still less will analysis, be it ever so skilful and so subtle. Nevertheless, there is one thing which any competent guide can do for those who are only about to read Homer ; he can assist in orientating their minds ; he can aid them in placing themselves at the right point of view ; if he cannot tell them what Homer is, he can at least help them to see what Homer is not. A generation has scarcely elapsed since it was possible for an accomplished scholar to include the following epithets among those which he gave to Homer's style :—'garrulous' and 'quaint : ' also to say, 'Homer rises and sinks with his subject,—is prosaic when it is tame, is low when it is mean.' Mr Matthew Arnold's 'Lectures on Translating Homer' showed once for all how erroneous is the conception which these epithets imply ; we may differ from him on some points, but nothing could be better than what he says as to the four cardinal qualities of Homer,—plainness of thought, plainness of style, nobleness, and rapidity. Each can best be illustrated by a contrast.

First, then,—plainness of thought. Agamemnon says in Homer: 'There will be a day when sacred Ilios shall perish.' How does the Elizabethan translator, Chapman, render this?

Homeric
plainness of
thought.

'And such a stormy day shall come, in mind and soul I know,
When sacred Troy shall *shed her tow'rs, for tears of overthrow.*'

The addition of the epithet 'stormy' to the word 'day' might pass; but the thing by which Chapman violates plainness of thought, and is therefore un-Homeric, is the idea of comparing Troy's towers, as they fall, to tears which Troy sheds at her own ruin. This is not a mere padding out of the original; it is a new thought, of which the original has nothing; and moreover it is a fantastic thought,—a conceit. The Elizabethan age was fond of conceits; it was a puerile extravagance in the use of the newly recovered imagination. But if the Greek mind ever went through such a stage, that stage lies far behind Homer. When Pope said that Chapman writes, not like Homer, but as Homer might have written at an immature age, he was so far quite right. The proneness to 'conceits' is a fault of immaturity.

Then as to plainness of style. Sarpedon is exhorting Glaucus to fight against the Greeks: 'I would not urge thee,' he

Plainness
of style.

says, 'if men could live for ever. But as it is, since ten thousand fates of death beset us always, — forward! Either we shall give glory to a foe-man, or he to us.'

Pope translates:—

'But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
Disease, and death's inexorable doom,
The life which others pay, let us bestow,
And give to fame what we to nature owe.'

The two last verses are an expansion of the one Greek word, *ἔομεν*, — 'forward!' — and how the balanced rhetoric destroys its simple force!

Note, in passing, that these two qualities, plainness of thought and plainness of style, are wholly distinct. A plain thought may be clothed in artificial language, when the result is usually bathos, as in that well-known example, where 'open the bottle and cut the bread' becomes,—

'Set Bacchus from his glassy prison free,
And strip white Ceres of her nut-brown coat.'

Or a plain style may convey a curious thought, as when Lady Macbeth says,—

'When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man.'

Then thirdly, nobleness. Homer's manner is noble, whatever the subject may be, as he is always also simple and uncon-

Nobleness.

strained ; and here the snare for the modern translator is that, in trying to be unconstrained, he is apt to become ignoble ; that is, to use some word, recommended by the easy air which it gives, of which the associations are too familiar, or too prosaic — in a word, too low for poetry. Chapman falls into this snare, when he renders the words spoken by the Homeric Zeus concerning the immortal steeds of Achilles—*ἄ δειλῶ*, ‘ye hapless ones!’—by a phrase which, though idiomatic, is too colloquial—‘poor wretched beasts!’

Lastly, Homer is rapid. In combining this rapidity with unvarying nobleness, the
Rapidity. Homeric poems are unique. Homeric rapidity has two distinct sources. The first and most essential is the quick movement of the poet’s mind. His thoughts are direct ; they are ever darting onward ; and he does not retard their progress by details of a merely ornamental kind. ‘Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles,’ says Homer ; and in his first verse he has announced his theme. Contrast the opening of ‘Paradise Lost’ :—

‘Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the world and all our woe,
 With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
 Sing, Heavenly Muse.’

Observe that this first source of Homeric rapidity is not a necessary or universal characteristic of Greek epic poetry as such ; Hesiod does not possess it. It is distinctive of Homeric epos ; and though it belongs to both the Iliad and the Odyssey, it is in the Iliad that we chiefly feel this rushing impetus of mind. The other cause of Homeric rapidity is a joint result of language and metre. Greek has naturally a lighter and swifter movement than, for instance, Latin ; and the Greek hexameter, though its rhythm varies so much in different hands, is always lighter and more rapid than the Latin hexameter. The opening lines of the Iliad are, again, a supreme example of this.

The twenty-second book of the Iliad is the climax of the poem. Achilles chases Hector round the walls of Troy, and slays him. Consider the enormous difficulty of treating this simple theme in such a manner that it should be a worthy climax for an epic on the great scale of the Iliad, one so rich in thrilling and varied pictures of warfare ; and then observe how the Homeric poet has managed it.

At the beginning of the book, Hector is standing outside the Scaean gate, and Achilles is rushing towards him over the plain ; Priam and Hecuba

on the ramparts implore their son to seek refuge in the city, but he is deaf to their prayers. Then Achilles comes up, and begins chasing Hector round the walls. Here occurs the first problem for the poet. The pursuit must not be too brief; that would rob both the heroes of glory. And, in fact, they make three rounds of the city walls. But how is the poet to maintain, and gradually raise, the excitement of so prolonged a race? How is he to provide that his hearer or reader shall follow that race to the very end, with an interest which not only shall not flag, but shall increase from moment to moment? He has recourse to one of the greatest but most difficult secrets of Homeric epos,—the blending of divine and human action. Achilles, chasing Hector, has completed two circuits, and the third is in progress; the intense excitement of the pursuit, watched by Trojans from the ramparts and by Greeks from the plain, is marked by these crowning words—‘*and all the gods beheld.*’ The poet then immediately proceeds: ‘*And to them* spake the Father of gods and men.’ In an instant we have been wafted from the plain of Troy to Olympus, and are listening to a debate among the gods, which ends in Athena obtaining leave to help Achilles, and darting down to earth.

The third circuit is now drawing to a close, and Apollo inspires Hector with a supreme effort. And the third circuit is all but completed, when Zeus in heaven uplifts the golden scales, and weighs the fates of the two men; the scale which contains the fate of Hector sinks, and he is doomed beyond recall. Athena now makes Achilles halt. Hector, she tells him, shall be persuaded to turn back and face him; she takes the form of Deiphobus, Hector's brother, and emboldens him to confront his foe; in the words of overweening confidence which Hector utters—so unlike his former misgivings—we feel, with a certain horror, that the power of the goddess has not been over his body alone; she has hurt his mind. And when the phantom of Deiphobus vanishes, Hector himself, sane once more, knows that he must die. His last rush against Achilles has the fury of despair; while the light that flashes from the spear of his foe is likened to the steady ray of Hesperus, fairest of the stars in heaven. He falls,—his dying prayer for funeral rites is spurned,—and he expires after prophesying the doom of his conqueror. Thus the movement of the human action to its goal has been diversified at three moments by divine intervention: the appeal of Athena to her father, the weighing of the fates by Zeus, the deluding of

Hector by Athena. And what is peculiarly Homeric in this is that it is managed without impairing the probability of the human action. Achilles and Hector do not seem less real, their deeds do not follow each other less naturally, because Athena interposes. The supernatural agency, on the other hand, is not mechanical, as that of Vergil's Olympus is apt to be. Athena, counselling Achilles, while invisible to Hector; restoring the spear, vainly hurled by Achilles, to his hand, assuming the semblance of Deiphobus, and then suddenly disappearing,—Athena is a being not less real than the mortals; the light of her beautiful and terrible presence seems to flash upon the battle-field, and again to vanish. Homeric poetry alone has been able to create a sphere in which gods and men thus mingle; in which the energies of men are tested to their height by the direct pressure of a superhuman force, while the gods become only more luminously divine by moving upon the earth among men.

This twenty-second book of the *Iliad* also illustrates two other characteristics of Homeric epos,—the use of direct speech, and the use of simile. In both of these Homer has set the example to later poets; but here, again, we should note what is distinctively

Homeric use
of direct
speech.

Homeric. When Achilles has stricken down Hector, he cries exultingly, 'Aye, Hector, when thou wert despoiling Patroclus, thou thoughtest to be safe, and didst not reckon of me, who was afar. Thou fool! But, far from him, at the hollow ships, I was left behind, mightier to avenge; and I have laid thee low. Thou shalt be foully torn by dogs and birds, but he shall have honour in his death from the Achaeans.' These few words reveal the inmost mind of Achilles,—his passionate grief, his passionate desire to avenge his comrade; they explain his ruthlessness towards Hector. This is the more peculiarly Homeric use of direct speech,—when it serves to bring a motive, or a situation, into clear relief. Hence a man's thoughts are often given as words spoken by him to his own soul, as Hector's audible thoughts are when Achilles is drawing near.

Simile, again, in its Homeric use, is never merely ornamental, but always introduces a moment, or a thing, which the poet wishes to render impressive. He prepares us for it by first describing something like it, only more familiar. Thus the chase of Hector by Achilles occasions four similes, appropriate to successive moments. Achilles, as he starts in pursuit, is likened to a falcon when it swoops after a

Use of simile.

dove. As the chase draws towards a close, it is compared to a chariot-race when the chariots round the turning-point of the course and the goal is in sight. As Hector, now almost spent, tries to keep close under the walls, and Achilles again drives him out towards the plain, we have the image of the fawn whom the hound will not suffer to crouch under a bush. And lastly, Achilles, when, though gaining on Hector, he cannot overtake him, suggests the admirably vivid simile of a man in a dream, who sees some one flying before him, but seems unable to move in pursuit. Other parts of the *Iliad* furnish examples of simile, which are in themselves more brilliant and elaborate,—such as that in the eighteenth book, perhaps the most splendid of all the similes, in which the flame flashing from the golden cloud with which Athena has encircled the head of Achilles is likened to the beacon-fire which blazes up at sunset from some beleaguered island, a signal for aid to the neighbouring isles and coasts. But nowhere is the Homeric purpose of simile more clearly seen than in the series just mentioned, which so vividly marks the course of the supreme struggle between the two champions.

Thus far we have been considering some of the principal characteristics which distinguish the

Homeric epics from all others. It will be well, next, to notice certain features which belong more especially to the *Odyssey*. And then, passing from Homeric to Hesiodic epos, we shall find it instructive to observe some of the broad differences between them.

III.

GREEK EPIC POETRY (*continued*).

IN any just perspective of European poetry, the resemblance between the Iliad and the Odyssey must always, of course, be far more striking than the difference. Both present ideal human types, both blend divine and human action, both unite plain thought, plain style, nobleness, and rapidity, in a manner which broadly separates them from all other compositions. To those who regard the epics from a little distance, and not from those closer points of view which have been gained by modern criticism, it will not appear astonishing that this common Homeric character should even have been regarded as showing the work of one mind; for undoubtedly the stamp of mind seen in both epics is one which has no comparable record in any third poem that could be named.

Differences
between the
Iliad and the
Odyssey.

Nevertheless, the differences between the Iliad and the Odyssey, which every reader feels, require to be expressly noted. If we omit to do so, we shall not adequately

appreciate the range of power which marked this early age of Greek poetry.

The material of the *Iliad* is furnished chiefly by warfare or debate. These interests are not wholly absent from the *Odyssey*, but they hold a subordinate place, and they have an inferior degree of animation. When Odysseus slays the suitors in the banquet-hall, we have, indeed, a full account of the fight, but not the tone of a fight in the *Iliad*; the suitors have no chance against Odysseus, who is here a personified Nemesis rather than a mere combatant. The Ithacan assembly in the second book of the *Odyssey* is perhaps most in the manner of the *Iliad*, but it is not highly effective in itself; since the appeal of Telemachus is evidently doomed to failure from the outset, and he has no remedy. The chief value of the scene consists in exhibiting the insolence of the suitors, and in making us feel that a retribution, however tardy, must one day overtake them.

As a whole, the *Odyssey* derives its charm from two sources,—narrative of adventure, and description of social life. In respect to both these elements, it moves in a region which is almost wholly foreign to the *Iliad*; and in both it has qualities peculiar to itself.

The twelfth book may serve to illustrate the manner in which the *Odyssey* narrates adventure. It contains the parting of Odysseus and his comrades from Circe ; the Sirens ; Scylla ; the impiety of the comrades in Thrinacia ; their destruction ; and the narrow escape of Odysseus from Charybdis. The first thing that we note is the brevity and simplicity. These marvellous incidents, coming one after another, are told quite plainly, without the least attempt to heighten them by elaboration or comment ; there is enough detail to produce an effect of reality, but no more. Thus, after briefly describing Charybdis, the hero says, 'We had our eyes bent towards her, in fear of destruction ; but meanwhile Scylla snatched six of my companions out of my hollow ship,—the bravest and strongest of them all. As I turned my glance back to the ship, and then in search of my comrades, all at once I espied their hands and feet as they were lifted on high, and they cried aloud to me in their agony, and called me by my name for the last time. Even as a fisherman on a headland, with his long rod, throws his baits to ensnare the little fishes, casting the horn of an ox of the fields into the deep, and when he has hooked his fish, casts it writhing ashore, so


Style of
narrative in
the *Odyssey*.

Brevity and
simplicity.

writhing were they lifted up to her cave; and there she devoured them, shrieking in her gates, while they stretched forth their hands to me in their dread struggle. That was the most piteous thing ever I saw with mine eyes, in all my toil when I was searching out the paths of the sea.'

He says no more on that subject, but continues thus: 'Now when we had escaped the rocks, and dread Charybdis and Scylla, then we soon came to the fair island of the god,'—Thrinacria.

This episode of Scylla, so naturally and vividly told, fills only sixteen lines. The entire series of adventures in the twelfth book occupies only 453 lines. A like plainness and absence of prolixity mark the narratives throughout. We observe the comparison of Scylla to a fisherman,—introduced, as it might have been in the *Iliad*, to mark a crisis. But, since the *Odyssey*, owing to the nature of its subject, has fewer moments of concentrated excitement than occur in the battles of the *Iliad*, it has fewer similes,—only about forty, as against the *Iliad's* 180. The *Iliad* is an epic full of dramatic force; further, it is not only noble, but preëminently an example of the grand style, as in the description of Apollo descending from heaven to smite the Greeks with pestilence: 'The arrows clanged upon the shoulders of the



god in his wrath, as he moved ; and his coming was in the likeness of night.' The *Odyssey* is rather the model of how a story should flow ; it contains examples of the grand style, as when Circe says to her guests, on their return from the voyage to the nether world, 'Men overbold, who have gone down alive to the house of Hades, that ye should twice know death, while other men die once ;' but its distinctive nobleness is a noble charm, especially in scenes of peace, and, above all, of domestic life.

The comparative absence of that dramatic force which belongs to the *Iliad* is compensated Picturesque effects. in the *Odyssey* by a peculiar instinct for picturesque effect. Thus, when Odysseus and his son are removing the arms from the hall to the armoury by night, Telemachus suddenly cries : ' Father, this is a great marvel that I see with mine eyes ; yes, the walls of the hall, and the fair spaces between the pillars, and the beams of pine, and the pillars that run aloft, are bright as it were with flaming fire. Verily some god is within, of those that hold the high heaven.'

One other example may be given. When Odysseus is about to enter the palace of the Phaeacian king, Athena throws a cloud around him, to shroud him from the eyes of those who might forbid him

to enter. Going onward unseen, he comes at last into the presence of King Alcinous and Queen Arété. He throws himself in supplication before the queen. At that moment the wondrous mist melts away from him, and silence falls on the Phaeacians, as they marvel at the suppliant. This instinct for the picturesque, into which colour and grouping enter, is akin to the dramatic sense, yet distinct from it, and also from the Hellenic sense of clear and beautiful outline. In both the examples just given, one condition is suddenness; the fancy to which such impressions come with a bright surprise is nimble and open,—quick to see the supernatural around it.


Thoroughly congenial to it is that strain of magical or fairy lore which pervades the Odyssey. This element is not wholly ^{Magical or fairy lore.} absent from the Iliad; there is the horse Xanthus, speaking with a human voice; there are the self-moving tripods of Hephaestus, and his golden handmaids who can move, think, and speak. In the Iliad, however, such things are rare and incidental, whereas they belong to the very texture of the other epic. The magical herb 'moly' given by Hermes to Odysseus; Ino's magical veil which saves him from drowning; the portents in Thrinacria, when the flesh of the oxen bellowed on the

spits, and the hides stripped from them began to move; the Phaeacian ship turned to stone; the second-sight of the seer Theoclymenus,—these are instances which occur at once. Such marvels, it may be remarked, express a side of the Ionian fancy which had been developed by maritime adventure, as other aspects of Ionian character are seen in the sensuous tendencies of the hero's comrades, or, again, in the graces of social intercourse which give such a charm to the epic. Both as a story of voyages and as a picture of civilization, the *Odyssey* bears, more strongly than the *Iliad*, the stamp of Ionia.

Another trait which pervades the narratives of the *Odyssey*, further distinguishing it from the *Iliad*, is the mode of conceiving that divine agency which is blended with the human. In the *Iliad*, Olympus is a mountain from whose heights the gods descend; the peaks of Ida or of Samothrace are stations from which the gods observe men; an Olympian debate has all the reality of a debate on the earth; the divine action upon men either is physical, or consists in the transmission of commands to them by a divine messenger who appears in visible shape. In the *Odyssey* a spiritual element enters more largely into the dealing of the deities with mortals. Thus

The divine
agency.

Odysseus says to his son, 'When Athena of deep counsel *shall put it into my heart*, I will give thee a sign;' and faith in the gods has become a more spiritual feeling. Telemachus says that Zeus and Athena are the best of allies, 'though their seat is in the clouds on high.' And the image of Olympus itself has become more ethereal: it is a far-off place, 'where, as men say, is the seat of the gods that standeth fast for ever. Not by winds is it shaken, nor ever wet with rain, nor doth the snow come nigh thereto, but the clearest air is spread around it, without a cloud, and a pure light floats over it; therein the blessed gods are glad eternally.' A good instance of this difference between the two epics may be found in the twelfth book of the Odyssey. When Odysseus discovers that, while he slept, his companions have slain the oxen of the sun-god, he cries aloud to father Zeus in his anguish. And then he relates a short scene among the gods: the nymph Lampetie goes swiftly to Helios, the sun-god, and tells him that his oxen have been slain. Helios then addresses Zeus and the assembled gods, declaring that, unless he is compensated for his oxen, he will shine no more over the earth; he will go down to Hades, and shine among the dead. Zeus, in reply to this threat, promises that he will wreck the



ship of the offenders. The whole scene occupies only thirteen lines. If it is compared with a parallel incident of the *Iliad*,—the scene between Zeus and Athena in the twenty-second book, which, like this, precedes a catastrophe on earth,—it will be felt how much less of human-like realism there is in the passage of the *Odyssey*. There is a further difference; Odysseus feels bound to explain how he came by this knowledge; and so he adds that he had heard it from the nymph Calypso, who herself had heard it from Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Now in the *Iliad* there is no example of such a reply to anticipated scepticism; when deeds done, or words spoken, among the gods are related in the *Iliad*, the narrator is the poet himself, who is supposed to know them by inspiration. The only exception is Agamemnon's narrative, in the nineteenth book (95-136), of the discussion in Olympus before the birth of Heracles,—a passage which seems to have been interpolated in the *Iliad* from an epic *Heracleia*.

The last distinctive trait of narrative in the *Odyssey* which we shall notice is an occasional approach of the tone of comedy, as moderns would deem it. Thus Odysseus says, after relating how he had warned his comrades against Charybdis, 'I did not go on to

Traits verg-
ing on
comedy.

speak of Scylla, lest haply they should give up rowing, and hide themselves in the hold.' This savours to us of comedy, because it is so opposite to the heroic ; but the poet did not intend it to be comic ; the quality in him which it indicates is *naïveté*. So, again, when the men snatched by Scylla are compared to fish wriggling at the end of an angler's line, the comparison is to us grimly grotesque ; but the poet's aim was simply to make the horror vivid. And everywhere, even in such touches, the style of the Odyssey preserves its Homeric nobleness.

Let us turn now to that other source, besides narrative of adventure, to which the Odyssey owes its peculiar charm, namely, the descriptions of social life. Here the key-note is given by the position of women in the Homeric age ; and that position, as exhibited in the Odyssey, is essentially the same of which the Iliad affords glimpses. But the Iliad, an episode of warfare, can give glimpses only ; it is reserved for the Odyssey to furnish more complete pictures. The central point is the sanctity of marriage, which is not merely the Homeric rule, but a rule with few and narrowly limited exceptions. The position of the Homeric wife in her own home may be best stated

Pictures of
social life.

Position of
women.

by saying that it is essentially the same as it is in Christian countries to-day, and totally unlike the position ordinarily held by the Athenian wife in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. If Odysseus and Penelope were the only wedded couple whose relations were portrayed in the *Odyssey*, it might be argued that they could not be taken as a normal instance, since conjugal loyalty is the special point of their story. But the possible objection disappears when we consider the other cases,—Alcinous and *Arêtè*, Menelaus and Helen: the position of the wife is similar in all three examples. The hero and heroine of the poem may then be safely regarded as expressing, though in a high form, the general feeling of Greeks in the poet's age. We remember the frank words of Odysseus to Calypso: 'Be not wroth with me hereat, goddess and queen. . . Myself I know it well, how wise Penelope is meaner to look upon than thou, in comeliness and stature. But she is mortal, and thou knowest not age or death. Yet even so, I wish and long day by day to fare homeward and see the day of my returning.' Not less expressive are the words in which Penelope asks her husband's pardon for not having welcomed him when he first came in disguise,—she so dreaded, so she says, to be deceived. In truth,

her slowness to believe is the best measure of her wish to believe. Of Arêtè, the wife of king Alcinous, it is said: 'She hath, and hath ever had, all worship heartily from her dear children, and from her lord Alcinous, and from all the folk, who look on her as a goddess, and greet her with reverent speech, when she goes about the town.' When Odysseus is about to present himself in the palace of Alcinous, Nausicaa, the king's daughter, gives him this counsel, after describing to him how he will find the king and queen together in the great hall: 'Pass thou by him, and cast thy hands about my mother's knees, that thou mayest see quickly and with joy the day of thy returning, even though thou art from a very far country. If but *her* heart be kindly disposed toward thee, then is there hope that thou shalt see thy friends, and come to thy well-built house, and thine own country.'

Nausicaa herself is not only the most charming girl in ancient literature,—so charming, that one shrinks from making her the subject of prosaic comment,—but teaches us more than perhaps any other person as to the position of her sex in that age. It is at once a proof of the freedom which she enjoyed, and of the reverence for women which such freedom implies, that her father should allow

her to drive with no escort but that of her handmaids to a distance from the city. (In Corfu, where Canóni Bay is the traditional scene of her meeting with Odysseus, the popular version of the story assumes that she was accompanied by her mother.) But the Homeric description of her meeting with Odysseus is the most instructive passage, and the most beautiful. When the other maidens are scared by the apparition of the wild-looking shipwrecked man, the princess is not afraid: 'for Athena put courage in her heart, and took trembling away from her limbs.' The perfect taste which appears in the Homeric treatment of the situation implies something beyond and above itself. No poet could have so imagined that scene whose instincts had not been moulded by a chivalrous respect for women; and no poet could have clothed the image in such language whose own mind was not pure¹. Nausicaa shows Odysseus the way to her father's city, by driving in front of him, while he follows on foot; but she directs him to stop at a poplar grove outside the city, lest by entering it in her train he should give occasion for comment. Alcinous afterwards blames

¹ There is one verbal trait which curiously illustrates this; where Odysseus is described as about to 'approach' the maidens, the word employed is one which no Greek poet of a more sophisticated age would have used in such a context (*Od.* 6. 136, *μῆξεσθαι*).

his daughter for not having herself conducted the stranger to the house ; and his words are another proof of the freedom which respect secured to such a maiden. One last glimpse of Nausicaa is when Odysseus, in all the comeliness which Athena has shed over him, is passing into the banquet-hall, and Nausicaa is standing at the door ; she says to him : ' Farewell, stranger, and think of me hereafter, even in thine own land ; for to me the first thou owest the price of life.' And he answers : ' Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinous, yea, may Zeus the thunderer, the lord of Here, grant me to reach my home, and see the day of my returning ; so would I, even there, do worship to thee, as to a goddess, all my days ; for thou, maiden, hast given me my life.'

The Homeric women generally are characterized by a gentle dignity and a refinement in which no modern civilization could show their superiors. They are essentially feminine, without being insipid or inane ; their sphere is in the home ; their occupation is in the ministries of wife and mother, of sister and daughter ; and in everything that Homer shows us of their relations, we recognize a natural warmth of domestic affections and a noble tone of manners. There are indeed two Homeric exceptions to such a standard ; but in



each case there are touches which render these exceptions fresh proofs of the rule. Nestor refers to the terrible crime of Agamemnon's wife ; but in doing so he notes how she had yielded only to the persistence of the tempter Aegisthus: 'Verily at the first the fair Clytaemnestra would have nothing to do with the foul deed ; for she had a good understanding.' And Helen at least feels a remorse which no reproaches could make sharper, The noble element in her character comes out in response to nobleness ; it is when her brother-in-law, Hector, has been vainly striving to inspire Paris with something of his own generous patriotism, that Helen's self-condemnation breaks forth in its bitterest utterance.

Thus in the Odyssey there is present the first condition of a worthy social life ; women are surrounded with the reverence, and exercise the influence, which ought to be theirs. And the tone of social intercourse found in the Odyssey has a corresponding refinement. If one had to specify its most general characteristic, one might perhaps say that it was the root of all courtesy, a fine regard for the feelings of others. The behaviour of Alcinous, when he notices that Odysseus is painfully affected by the minstrel's song, and presently makes an excuse

Tone of
social inter-
course.

for moving from the banquet-hall, is a case in point. The same delicacy of feeling marks the whole scene in the house of Menelaus, when Helen and he entertain the youthful Telemachus and his friend, Nestor's son, Peisistratus. The people for whom such poetry was written must have been a people of naturally acute perceptions: one feels this all through the social scenes of the *Odyssey*. There is nothing in the Athenian literature of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. which equals the *Odyssey* in this particular charm, rich though Plato's dialogues are in proofs of what cultivated intelligence could do to embellish society. If we ask the reason, surely it must be sought, at least to a great extent, in the fact that the position of women was so much higher, and their influence so much sounder, in the Homeric age. The place of *Arêtè* cannot be supplied by *Aspasia*. Modern readers are apt to feel that the *Odyssey* is more modern than the *Iliad*. The chief reason is that, in the domestic scenes of the *Odyssey*, they recognise so much which corresponds with modern feeling in regard to the relationships of the family.

Brief as this survey has necessarily been, it will have indicated in what sense *Iliad* and *Odyssey* alike possess that charm which we are wont to associate with 'the child-

Summary.
General
character of
Homeric
poetry.

hood of the world,'—a phrase which may be unscientific, or even in some degree misleading, but which at least expresses our modern feeling that in these poems there is a freshness, a simplicity, a beauty, which are altogether beyond the reach of art ; which, when their natural bloom is over, can never be artificially renewed ; and which belong to an age that, in respect of conscious thought, is related to our own as childhood to maturity.

There is, however, another aspect of Homeric epos which must also be clearly apprehended. Its form represents a perfection of poetical art which must have been gradually attained. Experience shows that the earliest efforts to employ a language in metrical composition are inseparable from some degree of rudeness. There is a struggle of thought with expression, a tendency to ignoble or grotesque modes of speech, an incapacity for the equable maintenance of a high level. Homeric epos bears no such traces of the primitive stage in literature. It has a perfectly artistic and elastic medium of utterance, which the poet uses with easy and unflinching mastery. The union of such consummate art in poetical form with the spiritual character of a simple age is the unique distinction of the Homeric poems. And we observe further that the personality of the artist is suppressed. He is to

us as Demodocus and Phemius were to the listeners in the *Odyssey*, merely the prophet of the god,—the inspired man to whom this gift of song has been committed.

Next to Homer early Greek tradition placed another famous poet, recognised as the founder of a characteristic type in epic ^{Hesiod.} poetry; one which was regarded as forming a kind of antithesis to the Homeric. Hesiod figures in legend as Homer's rival. They contended, the story said, at Chalcis in Euboea. Each recited passages from his greatest work: Homer, from the *Iliad*; Hesiod, from the *Works and Days*; and Hesiod triumphed. Hesiodic epos is represented, for us, by three extant poems, and some fragments. Two of these three poems are, fortunately, those with which Hesiod's name was chiefly associated throughout Hellas; while the third, though greatly inferior in interest and value to the others, serves at least to illustrate one phase in the later development of the Hesiodic school. These three are, the *Works and Days*, the *Theogony*, and the *Shield of Heracles*.

The poem entitled *Works and Days* is the most characteristic of Hesiod, and was so re- ^{The Works and Days.} garded by the ancients. In the present text there is some spurious matter, and not a little

confusion ; nor can the original form of the composition be exactly determined. Still, the nucleus, at least, is undoubtedly genuine, and bears a stamp which is in striking contrast with the Homeric. It cannot be placed later than the eighth century B.C. In the age of Archilochus, at the beginning of the seventh century B.C., the name of Hesiod was already famous.

The poet had a younger brother, named Perses, who had acquired more than his due share of their common patrimony by bribing certain judges. After living in idleness on this ill-gotten wealth, Perses is now reduced to begging from Hesiod, who declines to give him anything more, except good advice. And the sum of this advice is, 'Work, and be just.' The first part of the poem is concerned with Perses and the moral reflections which he suggests.

The second part consists of directions concerning the various tasks of the husbandman, and hints of prudence for seafaring men. This is the part from which the poem takes the first half of its title, the *Works*. There is a sort of appendix to it, in about seventy verses,—precepts as to marriage, friendship, and other subjects ; also as to certain ceremonial observances, necessary if one would avoid the displeasure of the gods.

The third and last part teaches what days of the month are lucky or unlucky for certain actions. 'Sometimes a day is a stepmother, sometimes a mother.' This calendar has suggested the second half of the composite title, *Works and Days*.

When we consider this singular composition as a whole, the impression which it leaves on the mind might be described by saying that there is a foreground and a background. The foreground is held by the definite practical teaching. The background is formed by Hesiod's general views of human destiny; and these claim the first notice. They are gloomy. Four ages of the world have gone before that into which Hesiod has been born: the golden age, when men lived like the gods, with no sickness or sorrow or decay, and died as if subdued by sleep; the silver age, in which childhood lasted a hundred years, but the later period of existence was embittered and shortened by men's own impiety; the age of bronze, terrible and fierce in its warfare; and then, as if by a partial return to the better days of the human race, the age of the heroes, such as fought at Troy, whose nature was half divine, and who passed from life to the Islands of the Blest, by the Ocean stream in the region of the sunset. And now Hesiod exclaims bitterly: 'Would that I had not

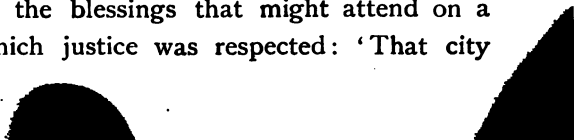
to live in the fifth age! Would that I had died earlier, or that my birth had fallen on later days! For now there is a race of iron.'

It is not clear why he should have wished that he had been born later; for he adds that the race of iron will be followed by an age still more depraved than itself. What is the origin of evil? Hesiod has his answer to that question. Zeus could not forgive Prometheus for having stolen fire from heaven. He therefore ordered the god Hephaestus to fashion a beautiful maiden. When she had been made, Athena gave her a girdle and fair robes; the Graces and Persuasion hung golden chains upon her; the Hours crowned her with the flowers of spring; the god Hermes gave her guile and deceiving words: and because every god had dowered her with a gift, she was called the maiden of all gifts, Pandora. Then Zeus sent her to the brother of Prometheus, named, not, like him, from forethought, but from afterthought,—from taking thought when it is too late,—Epimetheus. Epimetheus had been warned by his wiser brother not to accept any gift from Zeus; but he disregarded the advice and received Pandora. This crafty maiden then took the lid off a certain large jar, in which all the evils that now plague the world had been shut up; and those evils went abroad, to

be imprisoned nevermore. Only Hope remained under the rim of the jar; for Pandora had replaced the lid before Hope could flutter forth.

And now, in this iron age, wrong-doing is rampant; great men devour bribes and give crooked judgments. 'Fools,' cries Hesiod, 'who know not how much more is the half than the whole, who know not how happily a man may live on mallows and squills!' For the edification of such great men Hesiod tells a fable, an *alvos*,—the earliest specimen of its class in European literature. Thus said the hawk to the nightingale, when he was carrying her through the high clouds in the grip of his talons, and she, transfixed on their sharp points, was wailing piteously,—this was his stern speech to her: 'Silly creature, why dost thou scream? Thou art in the grasp of the stronger; thou shalt go wherever I take thee, songstress though thou art; I will make a meal of thee, if I please, or I will let thee fall. It is folly to think of striving against one's betters. Then one is vanquished, and adds pain to disgrace.'

Hesiod protests earnestly against the hawk's doctrine that might is right. He draws a vivid picture of the blessings that might attend on a city in which justice was respected: 'That city




thrives, and the people flourish in it; peace, nurturer of youth, is in the land, and Zeus never ordains grievous warfare for that folk. Hunger and calamity wait not on men who give righteous judgment; but their fields are glad with festal joys. The earth yields them plenty; on the mountains, the oak bears acorns aloft and shelters bees beneath; the sheep are heavy with their burden of fleecy wool; the women bear children like unto their parents. They enjoy all good things in full measure; they travel not in ships; but the grain-giving Earth yields them her fruit.'

This picture must be understood, not as describing what Hesiod conceived to be possible for his own iron age, but rather as an ideal image of what might have been if the human race, in its downward course, had not angered the gods and increased its own troubles. As matters stand, 'the gods have hidden the means of life from men.' Hard, unremitting toil is man's portion; all his industry, all his foresight, all his scrupulous attention to signs and omens, are demanded, if he is to escape dire poverty, dire suffering, and premature death.

Such is the general view of life which forms the gloomy background of Hesiod's poem. But when we turn to the practical teaching which fills

the foreground, we find ourselves amidst comparatively cheerful surroundings. If there is nothing brilliant or beautiful or generous, at least there is the stir of busy work, and the fresh, open-air feeling of a close communion with the varying sights and sounds of the fields at each season of the year. A few lines from the beginning of the precepts on farming will serve to give some idea of the style: 'When the Pleiads, the daughters of Atlas, rise, begin thy reaping; but thy ploughing, when they are about to set. Forty nights and forty days are they hidden, but reappear as the seasons come round, when the sickle is first sharpened. That is the rule of the fields for men, whether they dwell by the sea, or in the hollows of valleys far from the surging deep. Strip off thy coat when thou sowest, when thou plougest, when thou reapest, if thou wouldst gather in all thy fruits in their season; lest perchance thou fall on a mid-time of poverty, and go begging to other men's houses, and get nothing: as thou, Perses, hast now come to me; but verily I will give thee no more, nor replenish thy measure. Work, foolish Perses; work the works that the gods have set for men.'

Hesiod insists, as might have been expected, on the virtue of early rising: 'Morning claims



a third part of the day's work; morning sets us forward on a journey or on a task,—morning, who at her coming puts many men on the road, and lays the yoke on many oxen.' And one of the charms of the poem is that it so often breathes the breath of those early morning hours when, in winter, the poet saw the mists resting on the tilled lands of wealthy Boeotian farmers, and saw it gladly, because such mists are kindly to the wheat crop; or when, as spring came on, he looked in the pale light over a landscape tinted by the early shoots of fig-tree and vine, which he has in mind when he speaks of the 'gray' spring, or caught the note of some bird that marked a critical moment in his busy calendar. "Give heed when thou hearest the voice of the crane from the clouds overhead, as she utters her cry from year to year. Her voice gives the sign for ploughing, and proclaims the season of rainy winter, and pierces the heart of the man who has not provided himself with oxen. It is easy to say, 'Lend me a pair of oxen and a wagon;' but it is also easy to answer, 'Nay, my oxen are busy.'" The swallow, heard at daybreak, warns the husbandman that the early spring pruning of the vines must be delayed no longer. And as spring is passing into early summer, the farmer who has deferred his ploughing

knows that his last opportunity has come 'when the cuckoo utters her cry from amid the leaves and gladdens the hearts of men the wide world over.' The smaller signs which the poet notes are often curious. When snails leave the ground and begin to crawl over plants, this shows that the summer season is too far advanced to permit further labour at the vines; it is time to prepare for the early harvest. A good rainfall in spring is such as fills, but only fills, the prints made by the hoofs of the oxen. The spring season for navigation has arrived when the leaves on the upper branches of the fig-tree have unfolded to about the length of a crow's footprint.

Hesiod's warnings against laziness or procrastination are often couched in pithy sayings which have the flavour of rustic proverbs. In wintry weather a man must not be tempted to waste his time by gossiping in the warm forge, lest afterwards he 'press a swollen foot with a lean hand;' that is, suffer from that twofold effect of starvation. The importance of storing up grain is enforced by the words, 'Drive the spiders out of your jars.' A sharp north wind is graphically described as one which 'makes an old man trot.' 'Take your fill from your wine-jar when it is full and when it is low, but spare it halfway down; thrift in the dregs

is a poor thing.' The maxims on the conduct of life in general are of the same type, and evince rustic caution of a somewhat cynical type; many of them, too, bear the stamp of life in an isolated hamlet, where a man's comfort depends much on having good relations with his few neighbours. 'Invite your well-wisher to dinner, and let your enemy alone; but especially invite your neighbour.' The reason for the last clause is given directly: 'If any mishap should occur in the village, your neighbours come without stopping to make their toilet;' but those who are further off, even though kinsfolk, stop to make it. 'Men have been ruined by trusting, and by mistrusting.' 'Do not make any friend as close as a brother.' 'If you do, then take care not to provoke him by injury; but if he wrongs you by word or deed, remember it, and requite him doubly. If he once more makes overtures of friendship, and is willing to render satisfaction, meet him halfway.' 'Smilingly demand a witness from your own brother;' that is, do not believe your own brother on his mere word, but at the same time appear to be playful, and pretend that you desire the witness merely because it is more businesslike. The advice respecting marriage is equally circumspect. The poet is not a misogynist, but the chief characteristic of his

attitude towards the female sex is caution. A man should choose a wife among his neighbours, says Hesiod, after a very careful survey; else his choice may supply these same neighbours with matter of animadversion. He admits, indeed, though somewhat dryly, that there is nothing better than a good wife.

All this is in the tone of the Boeotian farmer: how far we have travelled from the world of the Homeric *Arête* and *Nausicaa*! The poet of the *Works and Days* has a hard head and a not very generous heart; his cold and cautious prudence is often sordid. Even the duty of propitiating the gods by worship is referred to a mercenary motive,—‘that thou mayest buy another man’s land, instead of his buying thine.’ Yet along with so much that is hard or ignoble there is at least one element of nobleness,—a real feeling for the dignity of work. ‘Work is no reproach; the reproach is to be idle.’ And there is the feeling, too, that work makes for righteousness; work belongs to the divine scheme for men, and it is the idle man who becomes unjust. Thus the lower side of the poet’s teaching is qualified by such sentiments as this: ‘It is easy to find wickedness abundantly; the path is smooth and short. But the immortals have decreed that only toil

shall reach Virtue. Long and steep is the way to her, and rough at the first; but when the higher ground is reached, difficult though the path be, it is less difficult thenceforth.'

From the Works and Days we pass to the second poem by which Hesiod is chiefly represented, the Theogony. Here we are told how Earth arose out of chaos; how the eldest dynasty of gods, the firstborn of the elemental powers, was overthrown by the younger dynasty of Zeus; and how each person of the Olympian hierarchy came into being. What is there in common, it might be asked, between such a theme and a body of practical rules, like that contained in the Works and Days, for the conduct of daily life? How are we to conceive the basis, the fundamental idea, of the Hesiodic school, if these two poems are alike characteristic of it? The Theogony itself supplies the answer. It is not, in the Homeric sense, a work of art. Such unity as it possesses is derived from the thread of divine genealogy. It is a compilation of current lore concerning the parentage and relationships of the deities; the object being to give this lore in a continuous form. The work has been skilfully done; and the essential dryness of the subject has been occasionally relieved by short episodes. One

The Theo-
gony.

of these, the battle of the gods and Titans, imitates the style of the Iliad; though it may be doubted whether this passage belonged to the earliest form of the composition. The poem remained a standard authority. Herodotus couples Hesiod with Homer as a creator of the Greek theogony. The Homeric poetry prevailed by its own charm; the Hesiodic poem, which is little more than an Olympian peerage, could prevail only by authority. What was that authority? It is only a conjecture, though a plausible one, that the Theogony had the sanction of Delphi. Its materials must have been largely derived from temple-legends, often inconsistent with each other; and the compiler's endeavour to harmonize them could not easily have succeeded if the priesthood of Apollo had withheld the seal of their approval. In this connection it is interesting to note a few points of contact between the language of Delphi and the language of Hesiod. The *μέγα νήπιε Πέρση* of the Works and Days has an echo in the *μέγα νήπιε Κροῖσε* of the Delphic oracle (Her. I. 85). That oracle often used enigmatic substitutes for common words, as when rivers were called by it 'drainers of the hills' (*ὀρεμπόται*). This trait is strongly marked in Hesiod, as when he calls the snail the 'house-carrier' (*φερέουκος*).

And a verse from the *Works and Days* (285) actually occurs in a response given at Delphi (Her. 6. 86).

We see, then, that the basis common to the two chief Hesiodic poems, the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*, is the practical tendency: in the one case, to direct the farmer's daily life; in the other, to produce an orthodox history of the gods which should be useful as a standard work of reference. In neither case is the play of imagination altogether excluded, but the practical purpose predominates; the poet's first object is to instruct; whereas in poetry such as the Homeric, of which the aim is ideal, the first object is delight.

The third poem which bears the name of Hesiod is certainly much later than the age to which the two others must be referred,—the short epic called the *Shield of Heracles*. Other miniature epics of the same general class were also ascribed to Hesiod. What, it may be asked, is the distinctively Hesiodic feature in such compositions? Is not the *Shield*, in subject and in form, rather Homeric than Hesiodic? Our materials for an answer are scanty. But it may be suggested that the work of the Hesiodic school in this kind set out, originally at least, from the same point of view as the

Theogony, namely, from the desire to preserve the facts of local legend. The purpose was less poetical than historical. Gradually, it may be, the Hesiodic poetry became, in this province, a direct imitation of the Homeric; and that is certainly the phase which the Shield of Heracles seems to represent.

The broad differences between the style of Hesiod and that of Homer correspond with the inner difference of spirit. Homer's directness of thought and simplicity of language are always joined to nobleness. In the Works and Days Hesiod's thoughts are generally plain, and his language also; but his style is not always noble; it is often too homely for that; and, with or without homeliness, it is often quaint. One form of such quaintness is the device already mentioned as oracular, of riddling synonyms for plain words. Thus the hand is called 'the five-branched' (*πέντοζος*); a thief is 'one who sleeps by day' (*ἡμερόκοιτος*). Homer speaks of 'swift ships, which are the horses of the sea for men;' Hesiod would not have scrupled to use the phrase 'horses of the sea' as a substitute for the word 'ships,' leaving his meaning to be guessed. Again, Hesiod is rapid only in so far as the natural lightness of the Greek

Style of Hesiod — compared with the Homeric.

hexameter profits all who use it. He is not rapid in the further and higher sense in which Homer is so,—by virtue of the impetuous thought which is always darting onwards. Hesiod does not sweep us along on a swift flow of verse. He is usually concise, pointed, emphatic. Each fact or precept is stated tersely, in the manner which he thinks fitted to fix it in the mind; and then he goes on to his next fact. He hardly cares to provide smooth transitions, or to give his series of facts a fluent continuity. His small groups of verses are rather like so many separate beads on a string. If such verses were recited, they would not hold listeners as the Homeric poetry does. They are meant rather to sink into the mind of the individual who shall ponder them as he toils in the fields or wends his way to the temple.

Lastly, the Hesiodic poet is utterly unlike the Homeric in this, that he does not suppress himself. The artist merges his personality in his work. A teacher such as Hesiod cannot do so. He comes forward as an expounder of lore, religious, moral, or technical: the force of the message depends not a little on the personal earnestness of the prophet. The verses prefixed to the *Theogony*, in which Hesiod describes how the Muses appeared to him when he was keeping

Hesiod as a
teacher.

his sheep on Helicon, may be of another origin from the poem itself ; but the words there ascribed to the Muses happily sum up the difference between Homeric and Hesiodic epos. 'We know,' they say, 'how to tell fables that seem like realities, and we know also, when we choose, how to relate true things.' 'To relate true things' was the distinctive bent of Hesiodic poetry. It represents the effort to adapt the form of Ionian epos to a different genius and to material of a different order. This effort had only a limited success. The literary interest of the Hesiodic poetry is indeed manifold ; but Greek epos, as a characteristic expression of the Greek spirit, is represented by Homer, and by Homer alone.

The true instinct of the Asiatic Ionians created new forms for new material, so soon as they became conscious that they had outlived the great age of their own epic poetry. And in Greece proper, also, new forms were developed. To trace the earlier course of that development will be the aim of the next lecture.

IV

GREEK LYRIC POETRY: THE COURSE OF ITS DEVELOPMENT.

THE epic was for long the only poetry, artistic in form, which the Greeks possessed. If a lower limit for the period be sought, it may be placed approximately at the close of the eighth century B.C. Till then, epos held a solitary supremacy; and the secret of the spell which it exerted was in the charm of the past. The listeners surrendered themselves to the magic of a flowing narrative which carried them into an ideal region of heroic life,—not the life of the present, and yet linked with it by the simple faith of the men for whom the minstrel recited. Their own interests and thoughts seldom ranged beyond the sphere of action in which the heroes moved, and the sphere of debate or social intercourse in which the minds of the heroes found utterance. But gradually a change came. Monarchies gave place to oligarchies, and these to tyrannies, or lastly to democracies. Hellenic life became

Conditions
which
required
new forms
of poetry.

fuller of experiences and efforts which stimulated the thoughts of the individual,—giving him new tasks, new objects of ambition, new possibilities of enjoyment. This was more especially the case in the Ionian colonies of Asia Minor. Their cities were in the neighbourhood of barbarian foes; they were drawn together by the need of mutual protection; their social qualities, and their consciousness of the higher differences between Greek and barbarian, were thus quickened. Above all, familiarity with the most repellent aspects of Oriental despotism served to strengthen in them the Hellenic love of freedom. The Asiatic Ionians The Ionians of Asia Minor. were the first Greeks among whom democratic institutions ripened, however imperfectly. They were also the first among whom a life of some cultivation and refinement became possible for large classes of the citizens. The century from 750 to 650 B.C. saw the beginning of this change. It was also a period of enterprise and discovery. Distant seas and lands were explored; colonies were founded; commerce became more active; the bounds of knowledge were enlarged in many directions, and reflection was stimulated.

The new poetry corresponded to this new state of things. It was the voice of the individual man, interested in the present, and desirous of

expressing his own thoughts among his friends. It took two forms, those known as the Elegiac and the Iambic. They must be considered separately, and we will begin with the Elegiac.

Elegiac
poetry.
Its origin.

The word *elegos*, 'elegy,' was probably of Armenian origin, meaning first a misfortune, a sad event, and then a kind of dirge, played on the flute, for the dead. Phrygia was the region in which the music of the flute was first developed, especially by the musical reformer Olympus, in the eighth century B.C. From Phrygia the word *elegos* came to the Ionian Greeks on the coast of Asia Minor. Greek poets now set Greek words to this mournful flute dirge, which in its original form had been instrumental only. The earliest Greek elegies were doubtless purely lyric,—short mournful songs. Flute music, however, was not funereal only: in Ionia it became popular at social gatherings; and it could also appeal in stirring strains to the warlike spirit. Hence by the side of the funeral elegy other kinds arose. A poem of some length addressed to a gathering of friends, or intended for the citizens at large, could be recited after the epic fashion, being introduced by singing a few verses to the flute music, and concluded in a similarly lyric manner. Such elegies, mainly recited, but prefaced

and closed by singing, were now couched in the metre known as the elegiac couplet. The Greek word for this couplet, *elegion*, was naturally of later origin than the word *elegos*; it occurs first in Attic writers of the fifth century B.C. This couplet was the invention of Ionian poets familiar with the epic hexameter. The hexameter obviously required modification before it could be adapted to the requirements of the new poetry. Hesiod could use the hexameter as a vehicle for his precepts, even on homely themes, because he maintained the tone of an inspired teacher. But the confidences of friend to friend, or the exhortations of citizen to fellow-citizens, could not appropriately wear such a garb. Epic verse was too stately for that purpose. And it was open to a further objection. It was ill suited to those shorter effusions which the new poetry encouraged. If the flow of heroic verse is to have its proper effect, that flow must not be confined within too narrow limits. On the other hand, the unit of the heroic measure, the hexameter, had been inseparably associated by long use with the very idea of artistic poetry.

Such considerations determined the choice of the first instrument adopted by the new poetry. The hexameter was retained; but to each such verse was added a curtailed hexameter, the so-

called pentameter. The pair forms a couplet to which the cadence of the second verse gives a natural close. Hence even a single elegiac couplet has the effect of a complete whole. The elegiac couplet has a further characteristic which illustrates the history of elegiac poetry. Homeric epos had shown the capacity of the hexameter to express the most diverse feelings,—wrath, scorn, fear, entreaty, pity, anguish, tenderness. It could be modulated with almost endless variety. In the elegiac couplet it is the first verse, the hexameter, which pitches the tone of feeling; and the hexameter brings all its inherent versatility to the new metre. The relation of the second verse, the pentameter, to the first is again infinitely various. If the hexameter has been a trumpet-call to battle, the pentameter, by its gentler tone, can give an effect of contrast. Or if the first verse has been pathetic, the second verse can echo it in a softer key. Universally, the effect of the pentameter in the elegiac couplet is that, instead of sweeping the mind onward, as is done by a continuous flow of hexameter verse, it invites our thought to return upon itself; it gives a meditative pause, a moment of reflection. And these two essential properties of the elegiac couplet are expressed in the actual course of the elegiac development. Elegiac poetry

was universal in its range of theme ; but its tone was always tinged with meditation, and often with sadness.

The varied capabilities of elegy are sufficiently displayed by the series of poets who represent it during the first two centuries or so of its existence, the period in which it was freshest and most vigorous, from about 700 B.C. down to the time of the Persian wars. The fragments which remain are indeed for the most part meagre, but they illustrate the wide range of tones which the new instrument could yield. Callinus of Ephesus, the earliest elegist on record, belonging to the first decades of the seventh century, appears, in the few verses which remain, as the author of a stirring appeal to the warlike spirit which had too long slumbered in the bosoms of his Ionian fellow-citizens, now menaced by the invasion of a barbarian horde. Martial elegy soon has another representative in another Ionian, Tyrtaeus, who found more congenial listeners in the youth of Sparta, his adopted home. Alike in technical skill and in manly vigour, Tyrtaeus is greatly superior to Callinus. In some of his couplets the call to battle rings out like a clarion note. Meanwhile, a greater poet than either Callinus or Tyrtaeus had been illustrating the

Elegiac
poets, and
their themes.

Callinus.

Tyrtaeus.

primary use of elegy in lament for the dead. From the Ionian Archilochus of Paros we have
Archilochus. some beautiful verses mourning the fate of friends who had been lost at sea. Somewhat later, but before the close of the seventh century, Mimnermus of Smyrna strikes yet another
Mimnermus. note. He composed martial elegies, among others; but his distinction is that of being the first elegiac poet known to us who applied elegy to themes of love. His tone is plaintive, and marked by the inevitable sadness of one who prizes life only for those pleasures which old age takes away. He is indeed the interpreter of a degenerating Ionia, of a people destined to bear the yoke; but he is also interesting as the poetical ancestor of those elegiac poets, Greek or Roman, whose chief inspiration was derived from tender sentiment.

With Solon, at the beginning of the sixth century, a new element comes into elegy.
Solon. He employs it for the utterance of his thoughts on the evils which afflict Attica, and on his own efforts to remedy them. These are the thoughts of a statesman who is also a philosopher; they are inseparably connected with still wider and deeper reflections on the permanent conditions of human life. Man proposes, but the gods dis-

pose ; the prophet can read omens, but cannot avert fate ; the physician can prescribe, but has no assurance of healing. Solon thus represents in its highest form that tendency of Greek elegy which is described by the term 'gnomic,'—the desire to inculcate moral precepts and practical wisdom. This tendency was continued, though in a feebler and more prosaic strain, by ^{Phocylides.} Phocylides of Miletus, who belonged to the second half of the sixth century. And at the same period it found a more interesting exponent in Theognis of Megara, the only Dorian, ^{Theognis.} perhaps, who attained eminence in elegiac poetry. Theognis, an aristocrat impoverished and exiled by the triumph of the democratic party in his native Megara, is a man to whom the world is out of joint, but whose faith in the beliefs and traditions of Dorian aristocracy is unshaken. That faith is as inseparable from his belief in the divine government of the world as the royalism of a French emigrant in the days of the Revolution was inseparable from his Catholicism ; when the Dorian aristocracy is depressed, the face of heaven is darkened : but even in that twilight of the gods Theognis still sacrifices to the goddess Hope ; and meanwhile he is fain to impress salutary counsels on his young friend Cynos. There is at once a

kinship and a contrast between the elegiac moralist, who thus enforces traditional maxims, and the philosopher Xenophanes, who towards the close of the sixth century used elegy in protest against certain usages of his day. Xenophanes is anxious to raise the tone of conversation at dinner-parties, where the guests were too much addicted to entertaining each other with the fictions of the old poets. He would fain have them turn from Centaurs and Titans to more edifying topics. Again, he deprecates the honour paid to athletes, while men of intellect are neglected. This last view, put forward about the time when great lyricists were writing odes of victory, stamps Xenophanes as a man thoroughly out of accord with ordinary Hellenic life ; in his hands, elegy gave one more proof of its versatility by serving the purpose of the modern pamphlet, in which a social reformer airs his favourite crotchet. We now come to the age of the Persian wars ; and Simonides shows how the elegiac couplet can be made a vehicle for commemorative inscription,—summing up great national events in a few clear-cut words, beautiful as sculpture, or finding an utterance for public or private grief. Sappho had already given an exquisite example of elegiac pathos in her epitaph of four lines on the maiden Timas. But

no one before or after Simonides illustrated as he did the full efficacy of the elegiac metre for every kind of monumental expression. Take, for instance, those four simple lines on the men of Tegea who had fallen in war,—probably in the battle of Plataea (fr. 102, Bergk) :—

τῶνδε δι' ἀνθρώπων ἀρετὰν οὐχ ἴκετο καπνὸς
αἰθέρα, δαιομένης εὐρυχόρου Τεγέης·
οἱ βούλοντο πόλιν μὲν ἐλευθερίᾳ τεθαλυῖαν
παισὶ λιπεῖν, αὐτοὶ δ' ἐν προμάχοισι πεσεῖν.

'It was due to the valour of these men that smoke did not go up to heaven from the burning of spacious Tegea. Their choice was to leave their children a city flourishing in freedom, and to lay down their own lives in the front of the battle.'

Observe the noble and massive simplicity of the words, which follow each other in a perfectly natural order; the force with which the first couplet describes the greatness of the peril, and the simple pathos with which the second describes the resolve by which that peril was averted.

Elegiac poetry thus afforded a field in which any man could try his poetical powers on any theme. Other forms, the epic, the lyric, the dramatic, were bound by tradi-
Popular character of elegiac poetry.

with certain divisions of the Greek race, as the choral lyric was especially Dorian, and as Tragedy was Attic. But elegy was entirely free in regard to range of subject-matter, and was open to all. And no other form of Greek poetry had so prolonged an existence. From 700 B.C. down to the fall of the Eastern Empire, verse continued to be written in the elegiac metre. Its enduring vitality. Constantinus Cephalas was adding recent work to his Anthology at the time when the English Æthelstan was defeating the Danes. Out of some 2,800 epigrams in the Palatine collection, all but about 300 are elegiac. This enduring popularity of the elegiac measure was due to the fact that it was so tolerant of mediocrity. Before Herodotus, the Greeks had nothing that can properly be called prose literature. The elegiac form of poetry partly supplied that defect. If the remains of the early elegists are so scanty, one reason may be that their work was so abundant and so unequal. It was welcome as a familiar companion to Greeks of an age when poetry was judged by the higher standards of art; but it was also less likely to be preserved. We take more care of a book than of a newspaper. The great bulk of extant Greek elegy dates from an age when the creative prime of the Greek genius was over.

Iambic poetry comes into view at the same period as elegiac; that is, at the beginning of the seventh century. While the elegiac form was a modification of the stately epic, the iambic starts from the opposite pole. To the Greeks it seemed the nearest of all metres to the cadence of every-day speech. Aristotle observes that people were apt to make undesigned iambic rhythms in speaking, and the texts of the orators illustrate his remark. The origin of the name and of the rhythm is obscure. ^{Iambic poetry.} Greek legend pointed to an early use of ^{Obscurity of its origin.} some iambic measure in that popular jesting, of a satirical kind, which custom licensed at certain festivals. When Demeter was mourning for her daughter, the first smile was drawn from her, it was said, by the sallies of the maid Iambè. The very old comic poem *Margites* is known to have mingled iambic verses with hexameters. But the origin of the iambic rhythm, and of the closely kindred trochaic, was perhaps not Hellenic. The word *iambus* is conjecturally traced to Phrygia; and it is noteworthy that a town called Iambus, near the Troad, is mentioned by Hesychius. The Phrygian founder of the improved flute music, Olympus, is said to have composed in iambic and trochaic rhythms. The trochee was used in songs

belonging to the early ritual of Dionysus, which came into Thrace from Phrygia. The Ionians, the first Greeks who used these rhythms, may have derived them partly from Phrygia, partly from Thrace.

Both these regions were known to the Ionian poet who, early in the seventh century, artistically developed those rhythms, Archilochus of Paros. He wrote Iambic or trochaic verses of various lengths, and combined these with dactylic or other metres. For poems composed in these measures he probably used two different modes of delivery. One of these modes was purely lyric, the verses being sung throughout. In the other mode, the beginning and end of the poem were sung, while the middle part of it was given in recitative, with a musical accompaniment. His poems in the iambic or trochaic measure were designed to be recited among friends at social gatherings, as elegiac poems often were.

The iambic form, as used by Archilochus, was associated with fierce personal satire. His younger contemporary, Simonides of Amorgus, also applied it to satire, though rather general than personal. And about a century later, Hippônax of Ephesus

once more used iambic verse as a weapon of personal attack, giving the verse that peculiar ungraceful form known as the scazon, or 'limping.' Thus within a hundred and fifty years we find three Ionians who use the metre in satire. Its fitness for the purpose depended primarily on its nearness to the rhythm Why iambs were so used. of common speech. This made it a fitting metre in which to deal with those ludicrous or sordid aspects of life and character for which the elegiac measure, with its epic affinities, was too noble and too gentle. The old legends of the suicides caused by the early Ionian satirists may or may not be founded on fact, but in any case they are suggestive. We cannot tell whether Archilochus really drove Neobulè and her kinsfolk to self-destruction, or whether Hippônax had the same effect on the sculptor Bupalus. But the general credence which the ancients gave to such stories proves the scathing force which they must have felt in the satires, when they heard or read them.

This side of the iambic tradition was continued in Attic Comedy. But there is a larger aspect of iambic poetry which must not be forgotten. The satirical application, however frequent and characteristic, was after all accidental. It was merely one particular bent given to the general faculty of

the iambic metre, which was that of expressing thoughts in a form relatively near to

The general character of iambic verse.

the ordinary idiom of conversation. The fragments of Archilochus himself suffice to show that he was far from restricting his new measures to the satirical use. The splendid trochaic verses addressed to his own troubled soul do not imply any satirical context. Simonides of Amorgus also has left us some iambic verses, moralizing on the evils of human life, which contain nothing that might not with equal propriety have been said in the elegiac form. Solon's iambs, again, have some themes in common with his

elegiacs. Yet there is also a difference

How differing from the elegiac.

which should be noted. The elegiac measure, derived from the epic, suggests that the poet, like the old minstrel, is addressing a circle of listeners. Even when he speaks ostensibly to one person only, as Theognis to Cyrnus, the tone is still frankly social; the things said are such as might be said in a gathering of friends. The iambic form, on the other hand, being more colloquial, is more suitable than the elegiac when the thing to be said is more personal

Illustration from Solon.

or confidential. Solon illustrates this difference. Both in elegiacs and in iambs Solon refers to the troubles of Attica, and

to the remedies which he sought for them. In his elegiacs he describes the general character of these remedies. But the iambic form is that which he prefers when he wishes to defend himself in detail, —to answer the taunt that he had shown a shallow understanding or an irresolute spirit by failing to snatch the prizes that were within his grasp, or to meet the complaint that he had shipwrecked the hopes of his followers. Such controversy demanded some approach to the tone of real debate, to the briskness of attack and retort; and for this the iambic form was the right one. In this general aspect the iambic tradition was developed by the dialogue of Attic Tragedy.

When this distinction has been duly noted, the fact remains that elegiac and iambic poetry are essentially companion forms, Kinship between elegiac and iambic verse. alike characteristic of the period which immediately followed the age of the great epos. They are companions, because both alike enabled a man to utter what he thought and felt on any subject, public or private, and because neither form made, of necessity, any high demand on the poetical gifts of the person who used it. Of the two, iambic verse required perhaps the higher technical skill; and that is one reason why it was less popular than the elegiac.

This seems the right place in which to say a few words on the question whether these two companion forms of poetry should or should not be classed as 'lyric.' In their origin both were lyric, as we have seen. Certain elegiac and iambic poems were sung throughout, while others at least began and ended with singing. But this connection with music was gradually relaxed, or even lost. In the fifth century B.C., or from a somewhat earlier date, simple recitation, without music, was probably the rule, both for elegiac and for iambic poems. Greeks of the fifth century B.C. called lyric poems *melē* (μέλη). They never applied that term to purely elegiac or purely iambic poetry. These they would have classed, like epic poetry, under the general term *epē* (ἔπη). It would be confusing, then, to describe elegiac and iambic poetry by the Greek term 'melic.' But there is no objection to describing them as 'lyric,' if only it be remembered that the justification for doing so is historical; that is, these forms of poetry were originally lyric, though they afterwards ceased to be so¹.

¹ Bergk calls them lyric, but defends the classification on a ground which seems unsatisfactory, namely, because they are subjective, and thus share the essence of lyric poetry. Greek lyric poetry was not, however, always subjective; neither was elegiac. Nor in any case ought the word 'lyric' to be used as a mere

The earlier history of Greek literature is in one respect not unlike the progress of the *Iliad*. When Diomedes has displayed his prowess, it becomes the turn of Ajax, and then of Patroclus, Menelaus, Achilles. So, in the field of poetry, first one division of the Greek race, and then another, comes to the front. The Ionians, after maturing the epic form, develop the elegiac and the iambic; then Aeolians share with Dorians the glory of creating lyric poetry; and as the last-named reaches the summit of its excellence, the Athenians are perfecting the drama.

The period during which Greek lyric poetry flourished is roughly measured by the two centuries from 650 to 450 B.C. No loss Period of Greek lyric poetry. which the modern world has suffered in respect to ancient literature has been more often deplored than that of the Greek song to which those centuries gave birth. Of all the manifold forms which the Greek lyric assumed, there is only one which is known to us with any completeness, namely, the ode of victory, as treated by Pindar. The other forms are represented only by small fragments. Some of these fragments are, indeed, inestimable; but relatively to the body of Greek lyric poetry

synonym for 'subjective.' Bergk seems, then, to have taken the right course, but for a questionable reason.



which the ancients possessed, the whole collection is a mere handful of gold-dust. Nine lyric poets, including Pindar, were recognized by the Alexandrian critics as standing in the first rank. With the exception of Pindar himself, there is not one of these whose work can now be adequately estimated. Even, however, if the lyric texts had survived, they could not have been thoroughly appreciated without a more precise knowledge of the music to which they were set; and if the music, too, had come down to us, there would still have been a defect in our comprehension, so far as the choral lyrics are concerned, since the dancing which accompanied them was itself a work of elaborate art.

Nevertheless, this chapter in the literary history of Greece is not a blank. A study of the fragments, and of scattered notices in ancient literature, has made it possible to trace the general course of the lyric development, and to recognize at least the distinctive characteristics of the chief lyric poets. Greek lyric poetry had two main branches, the

Its two main
branches.

Aeolian and the Dorian. The Aeolian lyric was meant to be sung by a single voice,—it was ‘monodic;’ and it was essentially the utterance of the singer’s own feelings. The Dorian lyric was choral, and dealt largely, though

not exclusively, with themes of public interest, especially with those suggested by public worship. The Dorian lyric was a little earlier in attaining an artistic form ; but it will be convenient to speak first of the Aeolian.

The Aeolian island of Lesbos was the place where the Greek cultivation of music first made a notable advance. The Lesbian ^{The Aeolian lyric.} Terpander (710 B.C.) improved the four-stringed lyre into an instrument with seven strings, adequate to the purposes of lyric poetry, and ^{Terpander.} may be regarded as practically the founder of Greek vocal music. He established in Lesbos a school of citharodes, 'singers to the cithara,' which was long famous. The first condition of lyric poetry had thus been created. The special form which it took in Lesbos was due to the Aeolian temperament, and to the circumstances of the island. Aeolians were characterized, above other portions of the Greek race, by vehemence of feeling ; they were also sensuous ; but in the higher embodiments of the Aeolian character this sensuousness was ennobled by generous ardour, and refined by an educated instinct for grace and beauty. Lesbos, in the seventh century B.C., was a place where every charm of nature and of art coexisted with a large measure of Asiatic opulence.

The ruling class was a high-spirited aristocracy, chivalrous and warlike, but also luxurious, and peculiarly appreciative of natural loveliness in every form. Sappho's period of poetical activity

belonged to the years from about 610 to
Sappho. 570 B.C. From the mass of fiction or

calumny which later literature, and especially Attic Comedy, wove around her name only a few leading facts can be disengaged. She was the head of a school or group of pupils in Lesbos,—maidens whom she trained in the lyric art, sometimes with a view to their taking part in the religious festivals.

The motives of her poems were usually connected with this circle of disciples, and with the events of their lives. For example, the stanzas beginning *φαίνεται μοι κῆνος* refer, it is conjectured, to the man to whom one of her disciples was betrothed.

The bridal songs which Sappho composed were again for these young friends. There seem to have been rival teachers in Lesbos, such as Gorgo and Andromeda. Sappho was married, and had a daughter to whom she was devoted. In the political troubles of the island she was driven into exile about 595 B.C., and visited Sicily, but returned to Lesbos about 580. The fragments of her poetry are unique, both for their wonderful melody and for the intensity of passion which the

musical words express. They also show the finest sense of beauty in the natural world: in the night sky, when the stars pale before the full moon; or in places where cool streams are shadowed by fruit-trees, and 'slumber is shed' on weary eyelids 'from the rustling leaves.'

The fragments of Sappho, and they alone, reveal the secret of Aeolian poetry at its highest. Nothing that remains from her contemporary, Alcaeus, is of comparable significance. The scanty fragments suffice, indeed, to show his original power in language and in metre. The stanza known as 'Sapphic' was his invention, no less than the stanza which bears his own name. For the rest, he is the Lesbian noble whose fiery Aeolian heart was tried by party warfare and by exile, as it was cheered by love and by revelry; a brilliant cavalier, proud of his own order, who took the dark days with the bright,—always ready, like Lovelace, to crown his head with roses and to drown his cares in the wine-bowl. We see in him those common elements of Aeolian character which were clarified in the loftier and subtler genius of Sappho.

It was no accident that a four-line stanza was the form of composition principally used by both these foremost representatives

The Aeolian
four-line
stanza.

of the Aeolian school. Such a stanza, repeated without variation, suited the purpose of their poetry, which was to be sung by one voice, in social gatherings; just as the massive structure of the Dorian ode, with its strophe, antistrophe, and epode, was adapted to choral performance.

After Sappho and Alcaeus, the Aeolian lyric school found no exponent of similar celebrity. Little is known, unfortunately, of Sappho's friend and contemporary, the poetess Erinna, who seems to have given promise of great excellence before she died at the age of nineteen; still less is known of another who belonged to Sappho's circle, Damophyla. But the Aeolian influence reappears in

other combinations. Anacreon, the poet
Anacreon. of courtly festivity, is Aeolian, after the manner of Alcaeus, in so far as love and revelry are his themes. But while the strains of Alcaeus were dignified by ardent feeling and manly spirit, the Ionian poet's sensuousness is tempered merely by intellectual grace. The fragments of Anacreon indicate no passion; he seems scarcely even in earnest about his pleasures. The soul of the Aeolian lyric was given to it by the Aeolian genius, and could not live outside the sphere of Aeolian life.

The claim of the Dorians to the choral lyric

poetry known as Dorian is of a different and a more limited kind. It consists in this, ^{The Dorian choral lyric.} that Dorian public life supplied the themes with which that poetry was primarily concerned, and also determined that its form should be choral. But the poets who worked out the conceptions thus imposed by Dorian life were seldom of Dorian birth. In relation to lyric poetry, Sparta ^{Sparta.} may be regarded as representative of the Dorian influence. It was at Sparta that the musical improvements of Terpander and his successor, Thaletas, were brought into harmony with the Cretan art of festal dancing, and with the forms of lyric composition which Dorian festivals demanded. The Aeolian singers had taken their themes from the emotions and interests ^{Themes which it suggested to a poet.} of the individual. But the Spartan citizen, a soldier in a permanent camp, was less accustomed to the indulgence of private sentiment. The feelings most familiar to the Spartan were those which he shared with all his civic comrades, gathered for athletic games, or marshalled for battle, or assembled at the festivals of the Carneian Apollo; the thoughts which most readily appealed to him concerned the ancestral splendours of the Dorian race, the deeds of the Heracleidae, the glories of the heroes from whom

they sprang, the laws and usages which Dorian tradition had consecrated, the praise of the gods who protected Dorians and received their worship. The form of lyric poetry required for the expression of such thoughts was one in which many performers could take part; one which should be impressive on occasions of public solemnity, and which should satisfy not only ear and mind, but also that sense of rhythmic movement which had been developed in Sparta by the habit of gymnastic exercises. Such exercises were not confined to Spartan men, but were prescribed for Spartan maidens also; whose choral dances, moreover, formed a prominent feature of Spartan festivals.

The first recorded poet of the choral lyric appears at Sparta about the middle of the seventh century B.C. This is Alcman, a Lydian


Alcman.

who had been brought from Asia Minor to Sparta as a slave. Such rudimentary choral poetry as already existed at Sparta had two main characteristics: it belonged to religious liturgies, and the words were subordinate to the music. The solemn *νόμοι*, 'nomes,' sung to the gods, and especially to Apollo, exemplified these traits. The most general change made by Alcman was in the direction of secularizing choral poetry. His best known compositions were odes to be sung by


choruses of Spartan maidens, *parthenia*. Into these he introduced a large variety of feelings and interests which had no connection with religious ritual. The sentiments were sometimes those of the poet himself, sometimes those of the maidens by whom the ode was sung. Occasionally there was a kind of lyric dialogue between the poet and his chorus. These *parthenia* were composed in strophe and antistrophe, and were accompanied by the flute. One of the most notable fragments, in which the poet distinguishes and compliments individual maidens of the chorus by name, was found in Egypt in 1855. In another fragment, consisting of four hexameters, Alcman bewails that he is now too infirm to move round swiftly with the dancers; he wishes that he were like the sea-bird called 'cerylus,' 'that sea-blue bird of spring,' who skims the bright surface of the waves with the halcyons. He also composed hymns to the gods, and to the Spartan demigods Castor and Pollux: choral songs, too, for men and boys at the festival called *Gymnopaedia*, and marching-songs for the Spartan troops. A portion of his poetry, however, seems to have had no link with any public occasion, and to have been merely the expression of his own feelings. His sympathy with external nature was evidently true and keen.

We have his description of a serene night in Lacedaemon, as he saw it in that fair valley of the Eurotas, under the grand cliffs of Taygetus: 'The summits of the mountains are sleeping, and the ravines, the headlands, and the torrent courses, the leaves that the black earth nourishes, and all creeping things, the wild creatures of the hills, and the race of bees, and the monsters in the depths of the dark sea; and sleep is upon the tribes of wide-winged birds.' Altogether, the Lydian Alcman is an interesting figure in that age of Sparta, when its stern military life was tempered by a larger measure of liberal culture than in later days. He had the ease and grace of an Ionian, with something of an Asiatic bent towards luxury. Yet his choral poetry must have been in unison with the tastes of his audience. The Spartans for whom he sang were capable of appreciating the blended charms of lyric verse, music, and dance.

Stesichorus of Himera in Sicily (610 B.C.) is a poet of greater importance than Alcman, and must be regarded as the chief representative of the Dorian choral lyric in its earlier period; he is, indeed, the poetical ancestor of Simonides and Pindar. In Alcman, as we have seen, there was a subjective element; the poet's own feelings found large expression. The choral



poetry of Stesichorus, on the other hand, was of a thoroughly objective character, and its peculiar stamp depended on its relation to epos. He composed hymns for those national festivals of Sicily and Magna Graecia in which the heroes were especially honoured. These hymns seem to have embraced the whole circle of epic tradition. Heracles, Orestes, the Atreidae, Odysseus, Helen, were among his themes. This was an innovation in the treatment of the hymn, which had hitherto been addressed to divine persons only. Alcman had indeed written hymns to Castor and Pollux, but they were at least demigods, raised above the heroes of human origin. Further, the style of Stesichorus was essentially epic; the poet's personality appeared as little as it does in the Homeric poems; and he used an artificial epic dialect, with only a slight tinge of Dorian. He added an epode to the strophe and antistrophe; an improvement commemorated by a proverbial phrase, 'the triad of Stesichorus.' This enlargement of the choral structure suited his epic subjects, which required a grand and massive framework. His choral epic hymns gave the first hint of the model on which Pindar's magnificent odes of victory are constructed. He was a precursor of Pindar also in the bold coinage of new compound words. Epic



grandeur, in a splendid and spacious choral form, was his charm for the ancient world. Simonides couples him with Homer; Alexander the Great described him as a poet worthy to be read by kings; Quintilian observes that he sustained the burden of epos with the lyre. It should be added that he also broke new ground in two other fields. His lyric treatment of popular love-stories, as in his *Rhadina* and *Calyca*, was the germ of romance, afterwards developed in prose by the Greek novel-writers. And his lyric pastoral, *Daphnis*, was the earliest example of bucolic poetry.

After Stesichorus, the next considerable name is that of Ibycus, who flourished about 550 B.C. The place held by Ibycus is in one respect unique.

Ibycus. He is the only poet in whom the two great branches of the Greek lyric converge, while they still remain distinct. His poetical life had two periods. In the first he lived at his native Rhegium in southernmost Italy, and wrote choral lyrics in the epic style of Stesichorus. The legend of the Argonauts and stories from the Trojan cycle were handled by him. During the second period of his career he lived in the Ionian island of Samos, at the court of the tyrant Polycrates; and here he composed love-poetry, which, to judge by the fragments, was more Aeolian in

its passion than anything written since the days of Sappho. It recalls Sappho in this, also, that the portrayal of passion is joined to a vivid feeling for the beauties of nature. Thus Ibycus says: 'In spring the Cydonian apple-trees put forth blossoms, watered by the river-streams where the Nymphs have their inviolable haunt; and the vine-buds come forth, growing under the foliage of the vine-shoots. But for me Love knows no season of slumber,—like the north wind of Thrace, that rages amid lightnings.' Love comes upon Ibycus, 'dark as the storm, a stranger to fear;' and he trembles at the god's approach. Similarly, Sappho compares the Love-god to a mountain whirlwind uprooting oaks. The Eros of these poets is a fierce and dreadful power; not the playful boy Eros of later poetry. We are reminded of the words in which Dante describes the apparition of Love: 'There seemed to be in my room a mist of the colour of fire, within which I discerned the figure of one of terrible aspect.' It was by his later or quasi-Aeolian work, not by his earlier work on epic themes, that Ibycus was best remembered in Greek literature.

The last great name before Pindar is that of Simonides. He was born at Ceos in or about 556 B.C., being some sixteen years

younger than Anacreon, and about thirty-four years older than Pindar. An Ionian by birth and by temperament, he chose the Dorian choral form for his lyrics, which were composed in an artificial dialect like that of Stesichorus,—epic with a Dorian tinge. As Anacreon is the Ionian of a luxurious Asiatic type, Simonides is the Ionian who has felt the chastening and bracing influence of Athens. He was a poet not only of great gifts, but also, in some directions, of marked originality. Stesichorus extended the scope of the choral hymn from gods to heroes; Simonides was perhaps the first who successfully extended it from the heroes to contemporary men. He wrote odes of victory, ‘epinikia,’ celebrating the successes of competitors in the great national games, and in these odes probably dwelt more on the details of the particular victory than Pindar usually does; also ‘encomia,’ odes in praise of men notable by position or achievement, which had less of a public character than the odes of victory, and were often intended to be sung at private banquets. One specimen, which has come down to us nearly entire is the ‘encomium’ on the Thessalian tyrant Scopas, whose guest the poet had been. The last ten years of his life were passed with Hieron, the tyrant of Syracuse, where he is said to have died,

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at the age of ninety, in 467 B.C. Such knowledge as we possess concerning the life and character of Simonides exhibits him as a clever and versatile man of the world, with all the subtle and graceful Ionian gifts, but without much depth of conviction or feeling. His pathetic power in poetry was, indeed, renowned, and in this quality he was ranked even above Pindar. It was Simonides who first made the 'threnos,' or dirge, an accepted form of lyric poetry. But his pathos was due principally to the perfect purity of style, the unerring sense of proportion, the exquisite feeling for harmony, with which he knew how to adorn the traditional topics of an epitaph. This fact is illustrated by his verses on the heroes of Thermopylae, —verses justly celebrated for a beauty of form which no prose version can even suggest: 'Glorious was the fortune of those who died at Thermopylae, and fair is their fate; their tomb is an altar. Others are bewailed, but they are remembered; others are pitied, but they are praised. Such a monument shall never moulder, nor shall it be defaced by all-conquering Time. This sepulchre of brave men has taken the glory of Hellas to dwell with it; be Leonidas the witness, Sparta's king, who has left behind him the great beauty of prowess, and an immortal name.' More famous

still is the poet's description of Danaë, with the infant Perseus, afloat in a chest on the stormy sea, under the stars; nothing could be more exquisite than the contrast between the fierce elements that rage around and the fair sleeping child, watched by the young mother, so anxious, so helpless, so forsaken, apparently, by the divine lover, Zeus, withdrawn in the recesses of that starry sky, to whom she makes her timid prayer,—not for herself, but for her child. Simonides was, in his own sphere, a consummate artist. The slender remains of his work show few traces of fire or passion, but they prove an unsurpassed command of all the graces that can touch and charm.

Kindred though less eminent gifts won renown
for his sister's son, Bacchylides of Ceos, a
Bacchylides. lyric poet who also was numbered among
the foremost nine. The disciple and imitator of
his uncle, Bacchylides was admired especially for
smoothness and finish. Like Simonides, he was a
welcome guest at the court of Hieron, and wrote
an ode of victory on that prince's success in the
chariot-race of 472 B.C., the same which is im-
mortalized in Pindar's first Olympian; but his
home, according to Plutarch, was in Peloponnesus.
The most distinctive branch of his work was
probably that in which he gave a choral treatment

to themes of social pleasure; and the fragments, scanty though they are, indicate a vein of genial gaiety which reminds us both of Anacreon and of Horace. His style is now best represented by some verses which describe the joys of peace with much picturesque detail. It is an interesting conjecture that the paeon in which these verses occurred may have been written at a time when the long struggles with Persia had just been closed by the victories of Cimon.

Reserving Pindar for a separate treatment, I would conclude this sketch of the lyric development by indicating some of the causes why the existence of Greek lyric poetry was not more prolonged. After the days of Simonides and Pindar it languished, and soon perished. Why was this so?

Causes
which led to
the extinction
of lyric
poetry.

As to the Aeolian lyric poetry, that had been virtually extinct from a still earlier time. It could flourish only where the conditions amidst which Sappho and Alcaeus lived were at least partially continued, and where the Aeolian fire burned in spirits like theirs. Sweetness and light, even when Athenian, were not enough to nourish Aeolian song. But when the choral lyric had once been transplanted from its Dorian birthplace to Attica, as it was by Simonides and his contemporaries,

why should it not have continued to thrive there? It was well suited to the purposes of Athenian public ritual, and, in the hands of Simonides, had become popular with Athenians.

One cause may be recognized in the diminished number of forms for choral lyrics which Athenian life afforded. In the seventh century B.C., the period at which the intellectual culture of Sparta reached its highest level, the lyrists whom Sparta attracted and honoured found one of their best opportunities in those choral dances of Spartan maidens for which *parthenia* like those of Alcman were composed. But the Attic maiden was brought up in a comparatively strict seclusion; the Dorian *parthenia* were wholly opposed to Attic feeling and usage. With regard to other species of the choral lyric, most of them were eclipsed at Athens by the popularity of one, the choral hymn to Dionysus, known as the dithyramb. And the dithyramb in its turn lost much of its hold upon public favour when a more brilliant and enthralling form of the Dionysus-cult had been matured in the drama. Meanwhile, the ode of victory, so popular in the age of Simonides and Pindar, gradually died out in the latter part of the fifth century B.C., as the divisions and troubles of Hellas began to react upon the national festivals.

And when, in the time of the Peloponnesian war, the dithyramb made a last effort to compete with drama at Athens, that effort only hastened the extinction of lyric poetry. The dithyrambic poets now sought to please by extravagance; and the art of music itself was corrupted by an excess of florid ornament. Attic Comedy, with its ridicule of these things, well interprets the moribund phase of lyric poetry.

But that poetry had left imperishable monuments. We have seen how elegy gave utterance to patriotic exhortation, to tender sentiment, to political wisdom or philosophic reflection, and to grief for the dead; how iambic Summary. poetry became the weapon of satire, but also, like elegy, a more general vehicle of self-expression, especially in animated argument or self-defence; how the lyric monody gave a voice to Aeolian passion and worship of beauty, a voice more feebly echoed in the voluptuous strains of the Ionian; and how the choral lyric, with its massive melodies, became the organ of Dorian life, civil or religious, of heroic legend, of congratulation to victorious athletes, or of the solemn dirge for the departed. In each and all of these kinds, the sure instinct of the Greeks had created a harmony between form and subject, a harmony infinitely varied, but always

their choice. In relation to the development of Greek poetry, Pindar has a twofold interest: he continues the tradition which begins with Alcman and Stesichorus, while at the same time he may be regarded as, in a certain sense, the precursor of the Attic drama.

Little is known concerning his life. He was born near Thebes in 522 B.C., being thus a contemporary of Aeschylus, and survived the year 452 B.C.; the date of his death is unknown. He enjoyed an elaborate and many-sided training in the complex art of choral lyric composition. He belonged to one of the noblest

Life of Pindar. families in Greece, that of the Aegeidae, which had branches at Thebes, Sparta, and Cyrene; and he stood in an intimate relation with the priesthood of Apollo at Delphi.

His relation to Delphi. These facts are of cardinal importance for a comprehension of his poetry. In his whole view of life he is an Hellenic aristocrat, profoundly convinced that men who trace their lineage to a hero have a strain of divine blood, which gives them natural advantages, moral and intellectual no less than physical, over other men. And he has also a priestly tone; he is an expounder of religious and ethical precepts, who can speak in the lofty and commanding accents of Delphi.

The forty-four odes of victory (*epinikia*) represent a type of poem which Pindar had received from predecessors. Archilochus had written a song to Heracles and Iolaus, with the refrain *τήνελλα καλλίνικε* ('See, the conquering hero comes'), which had long been in use at Olympia, and was still popular in Pindar's time. In the course of the sixth century B.C., which saw a great development of the Greek national games, the more elaborate 'ode of victory' came into being. Simonides, thirty-four years older than Pindar, was the first composer whose odes of victory became celebrated.

The first difficulty for moderns, when they try to appreciate the work achieved by Pindar in this field, is that of conceiving the ancient festivals themselves which called forth these odes. What was the meaning of a victory in the games at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, or the Isthmus? What kind of feelings did it evoke? Perhaps it would be hardly possible for us moderns to imagine these things adequately, even if we knew more than we do. The best resource is to make certain leading points clear to ourselves, and then combine them, as well as we can, in a mental picture.

Taking the Olympian festival, then, as the greatest, we may say, first of all, that the spectacle

was one of extraordinary brilliancy. The 'altis,'
The Olympian festival. or sacred precinct, of Olympia, richly adorned with the most splendid works of art, was a focus of Panhellenic religion. In the midst of it was the ancient altar of Zeus, representing the earliest Hellenic phase of the sanctuary, when the worship of Zeus was combined with the cult of the hero Pelops. This was the altar at which the Iamidae, the hereditary soothsayers, practised their rites of divination by fire, in virtue of which Olympia is saluted by Pindar as 'mistress of truth.' A little to the west of this was the Pelopion, a small precinct in which sacrifices had been offered to Pelops from the time when Achaeans founded Pisa. South of the Pelopion stood the temple of Zeus. The easternmost portion of this temple was open to the public; the middle portion was probably the place where the wreaths were presented to the victors; the westernmost contained the image of Olympian Zeus, forty feet high, wrought in ivory and gold by Pheidias, and inspired by these words of Homer: 'The son of Cronus spake, and nodded his dark brow, and the ambrosial locks waved from the king's immortal head, and he shook great Olympus.' Externally this temple was richly adorned with sculpture. The east front exhibited twenty-

one colossal figures by Paeonius, a group representing the moment before the chariot-race between Oenomaus and Pelops. The west front showed the fight of the Lapithae and the Centaurs. On the metopes were depicted the twelve labours of Heracles.


Other temples within the altis were those of Hera and the Mother of the Gods. There was also a large number of votive edifices, including the twelve treasure-houses, having the character of small Doric temples, erected by twelve Greek states in honour of the Olympian Zeus. Olympia was not merely a sanctuary, but also the political centre of a league,—a sacred city; and therefore the sacred precinct included a town hall and an agora, while outside of it were a council-hall, a gymnasium, and other buildings.

On the east of the altis was the stadion, an oblong enclosure used for the foot-races, as well as for the contests in boxing, wrestling, leaping, quoit-throwing, and javelin-throwing. It is computed that upwards of 40,000 spectators could have seen these contests from the neighbouring slopes. The hippodrome, for chariot-races and horse-races, extended south and south-east of the stadion. The valley of the Alpheus is itself of great beauty. Looking eastward, one sees the

snow-crowned ranges of Erymanthus and Cyllene in Arcadia. Imagine what it must have been when all those treasures of art, from which the Hermes of Praxiteles and the winged Victory of Paeonius are mere waifs and strays, were seen in the warm sunlight of September! One can understand the orator Lysias calling Olympia the 'fairest place in Greece.' At this festival, all parts of Hellas—from the furthest settlement in the western Mediterranean to the colonies of Asia Minor, the Euxine, or Libya—were represented by their foremost men,—the foremost in athletic prowess, the foremost in poetry, music, eloquence, the foremost in wealth and power. To enter for the chariot-race was a costly ambition: a rich man who did so was considered as reflecting honour on his city; and a Sicilian prince such as Hieron or Theron welcomed the opportunity, not only for the sake of displaying his resources, but also as a means to popularity.


Finally, the whole festival was profoundly penetrated by religious feeling, which gave it solemnity without overclouding its free joyousness. The gods, Zeus above all, and the heroes, especially Heracles and Pelops, were present amidst their worshippers, glorious in the creations of art, and were felt as watching, inspiring, and rewarding

the competitors. There is therefore nothing in modern life that can properly be compared with a victory at Olympia. The modern horse-race or boat-race may attract vast crowds, and may even assume the importance of a public holiday; but the Olympian gathering was not merely that: it was also a religious celebration. There is a still further difference. The glory of the modern race-winner or athlete is brief; it lives in the memory of a few, but not with the public. The Olympian victor, however, was a distinguished man from that moment to the end of his days. He had shed lustre on his native city, and was sure of such honours as it could bestow. His name was recorded at Olympia. Go where he might throughout Hellas, the title which he had won (*ὀλυμπιονίκης*) sufficed to procure him a more than respectful welcome. This permanent renown had its counterpart in the permanent value attached to odes of victory like Pindar's. Such an ode was indeed an occasional poem, in the sense that it was written to celebrate a particular event; but it was not ephemeral. An *epinikion* by Pindar was an abiding monument, an heirloom for the victor, his family, and his city. Thus the ode in which Pindar celebrated the victory of the Rhodian Diagoras is said to have been copied in letters of



gold, and deposited in the temple of Athena at Lindus in Rhodes. The anxiety of the foremost men in Hellas to obtain such a memorial can easily be understood, even though they may not have believed the poet's true prophecy, that his tribute, besides travelling further, would live longer than the marble of the sculptor.

An ode of Pindar is composed of various elements which are nowhere else so blended in literature, and which in the actual life of Hellas were nowhere so vividly brought together as at Olympia. First of these elements is splendour,—a reflex in
Characteristics of Pindar's poetry.
Splendour. Pindar's opulent and brilliant language of the material splendour which Olympia could show in so many forms,—the marble of temples and statues, the brilliant colours which everywhere met the eye when embassies from the courts of Greek princes in Africa or Sicily were present in the altis, and when every city in Hellas that appeared at all was anxious to add something of magnificence to the scene; the splendour of athletic beauty in men and youths, perfectly developed by long months of training; the splendour of rushing movement when chariots swept round the hippodrome, and when speed of foot or disciplined strength was tested in the stadion; the splendour



of choral music, and of stately ritual at the altars ; the splendour of nature around and above, whether sunshine was lighting up the altis and shining on the snows of the distant Arcadian hills, or the scene was steeped in that softer radiance of which Pindar speaks, when 'the full orb of the mid-month moon' looked down at evening on feast and music and song. As an instance of this quality in Pindar's style, we might take the first words of his first Olympian: 'Water is best, and gold is the shining crown of lordly wealth, like a flaming fire in the darkness ; but if thou wouldst sing of prizes in the games, look not by day for a star in the lonely heaven that shall rival the gladdening radiance of the sun ; nor let us think to praise a place of festival more glorious than Olympia.' In this splendour is included swiftness. The frequent and rapid transition from image to image, from one thought to another which has started up in the poet's mind, is one of the reasons why it is impossible truly to represent Pindar in continuous translation.

The second element which Olympia offered to the sight and the thought, as Pindar ^{Linking of present with past.} offers it to the thought and the ear, is the kinship of the present with the heroic past. The sacred ground of Olympia on which the com-

petitors moved everywhere reminded them of the heroes, the ancestors of the noblest Hellenes, the common glory of the Hellenic race. Here was a memorial of Pelops, there of Heracles, of Telamon or his son Ajax, of Peleus or his son Achilles, and many more,—all exemplars of strenuous effort, and of immortal fame won through effort, by the grace of the gods, and of the poets whom the gods inspired. Stesichorus had set the first great pattern of heroic legend treated in lyric verse. Simonides seems to have dwelt more, in his odes of victory, on the particular circumstances of the victory which he was celebrating ; and this is what might have been anticipated from his general bent. Pindar passes, as a rule, lightly and briefly over the details of the victory itself, and then links on his theme to some heroic legend, which often occupies the bulk of the ode. Towards the end, he returns again to his immediate theme. In finding a suitable link between theme and myth he shows marvellous skill : it is one of those points in which his versatile art well repays close study. But here I would rather draw attention to a larger aspect of his dealing with the heroic legends. These legends serve to invest the particular victory with a general significance, and to raise our thoughts from the latest victor towards one who strove and prevailed

in far-off days. They lend an ideal charm to a triumph of which the interest would otherwise be mainly local or personal; and in doing this they render Pindar's poetry once more a faithful mirror of Olympia. The youngest conqueror who had just received his chaplet of wild olive moved in an atmosphere of memories which raised his achievement to a still higher level by connecting it with the ancestral glories of his race.

A third element common to the Olympian altis and the Pindaric ode is counsel. When the priests sprung from Iamus stood beside the altar of Zeus, and read the fiery signs, they Counsel. expounded to men the omens of the future. The athlete about to enter the stadion saw before him an altar of Kairos, personified Opportunity, the power that enables competitors to seize the critical moment. In such forms, and many others, the promptings or warnings of divine counsel were expressed at Olympia; but this was not all. The assembled Hellenes might there hear the voice of philosopher, or poet, or statesman, who chose that occasion to urge lessons of wisdom. Pindar is thoroughly in harmony with the genius of the national festivals when he weaves precepts of religion or ethical maxims into the richly embroidered texture of his odes. He interprets no special theory;

rather he gives an impressive utterance to sentiments and rules of conduct which were generally current among Hellenes,—summing up, as it were, the teaching of Hellenic experience in a manner appropriate to such a festival. And as the Iamidae might have spoken from their altar in the altis, so Pindar speaks from the spiritual vantage-ground of his relation with Delphi. That is, he speaks loftily, with authority; and not seldom his phrases have an oracular stamp, being terse, strangely worded, or even enigmatic.

There is yet one other feature in which the mind of Pindar reflects Olympia. The festival brought Greeks together from the whole Hellenic world. The imagination of Pindar has a corresponding tendency to range swiftly over the entire area of Hellas, including the remotest regions to which Hellenes had penetrated. How spacious a fancy appears in his figurative description of a man whose hospitalities were unstinted and continual: ‘Far as to the Phasis was his voyage in summer days, and in winter to the shores of Nile.’ When his song has had free course, he thinks of it as a ship that has sailed westward, even beyond the gates of the Mediterranean, and cries, ‘None may pass beyond Gadeira into the gloom of the west; set our sails once more

Panhellenic
range.

for the land of Europa.' A voyage to the Pillars of Heracles furnishes him with a comparison for the utmost extent of good fortune. Here, as in his lofty flight and in his swift descent upon his object, he is indeed the eagle among poets, who surveys the whole field of Hellenic existence, while his piercing glance darts from land to land and from city to city.

Such, then, are the principal elements common to the festival and the poetry: splendour of light and colour, of physical beauty, of swift movement and strenuous effort, of choral music and stately worship, of natural scenery; vivid sympathy between the present and the heroic past; wisdom speaking by the voice of priest and prophet; a feeling for the unity of Hellas, quickened by the sense of its vastness and variety.

The choral form in which Pindar has blended these elements, and the manner of blending them, are more difficult to describe. The first Olympian ode may be taken as typical. Analysis of the first Olympian. The ode, of one hundred and sixteen verses, is composed in four triads of twenty-nine verses each; the triad consisting of a strophe and antistrophe, each of eleven verses, followed by an epode, of seven verses. The chorus, in singing each strophe and antistrophe, accompanied their song with rhythmic dancing; in singing each

epode they remained stationary. This ode was in honour of a victory in the horse-race at Olympia, won by Hieron, the ruler of Syracuse, in 472 B.C., and was intended for performance at Hieron's court. It begins with this immediate theme, Hieron's victory; then passes to the legend of Tantalus and his son Pelops; and ends with a further reference to Hieron. These three sections, beginning, middle, and end, do not correspond precisely with the limits of triads; but we may say, roughly, that the first triad is given to Hieron, the second and third triads are given to the myth, and the last triad returns to the subject of the first.

The sequence of thought is as follows : Olympia is the most splendid of festivals, peerless as the sun in the heavens. The victory of Hieron at Olympia has given him fame in the land of Pelops; *whom* the mighty sea-god Poseidon loved. That relative pronoun 'whom,' which comes in so naturally, is the link between theme and myth. 'Pelops, whom Poseidon loved, from the moment when Pelops was born with his ivory shoulder.' Now, the ordinary legend did not say that Pelops was born with an ivory shoulder: it told how the Lydian king Tantalus, when the gods honoured him by coming as guests to his table, slew his son Pelops,


and set the flesh before them ; the goddess Demeter unwittingly ate of the shoulder ; then the gods ordered Hermes to put the remains into a caldron, from which Pelops came out miraculously re-created, but without this shoulder ; and Demeter supplied its place by a shoulder of ivory. Pindar rejects this version, because it dishonours the immortals (that is, makes Demeter a cannibal), and tells the story thus : The sea-god Poseidon carried the young Pelops off from the banquet to Olympus, and then the spiteful neighbours of Tantalus invented the cannibal feast to explain the boy's disappearance. Tantalus was doomed to his fearful punishment in the lower world, not for serving up his son to the gods, but for stealing their nectar and ambrosia, and giving them to his mortal companions. And therefore the gods would not allow his son to remain in Olympus. They sent Pelops back, 'to be numbered once more with the short-lived race of men.' As the youth grew to manhood he fell in love with Hippodameia, daughter of Oenomaus, king of Elis. Her hand could be won only by defeating her father in the chariot-race ; and death was to be the penalty of failure. The young Pelops went and stood on the seashore in the night, and called aloud on the sea-god who had once borne him to Olympus. Poseidon ap-

peared to him ; Pelops told his wish, and prayed for the god's help in the contest with Oenomaus, full, as he well knew, of dire peril. 'But, seeing that men must die, wherefore should a man sit idly in obscurity, nursing a nameless old age? No!' he cries, 'this struggle shall be my task, and do thou give the issue that I desire.' Then Poseidon gave him a golden chariot, and horses, winged, untiring. Pelops overcame Oenomaus, and won Hippodameia. And now the grave of Pelops is honoured beside the stream of the Alpheus, and his glory is bound up with that of Olympia, '*where speed and strength are tried.*'

The myth is finished ; and another link like that which knitted proem with myth has been forged to knit myth with conclusion : 'Olympia, where speed and strength are tried. He who conquers there hath delicious sunshine in his life henceforth, so far as the games can give it.' And as the future is hidden from men, sufficient unto the day is the good thereof. The victory of Hieron claims this Aeolian song ; and if the god should not forsake him, he will receive such a tribute again. Greatness has many forms and levels ; may Hieron hold throughout life his supreme power, and the poet his supreme renown.

With this haughty parallel between Hieron and

himself, as to degree of eminence in their respective ways, Pindar characteristically closes the first Olympian ode. The outline just given will serve to show the nature of the framework, the character of the transitions, the manner in which a moralising strain is mingled with the others. As to the effect which such an ode would have produced when performed with choral music and dance, the nearest modern analogy—General effect of a Pindaric ode.—distant though it be—must be sought in the sphere of music rather than in that of poetry. Oratorios such as the Messiah or Israel in Egypt are at least nearer to Pindar, in their manner of affecting the hearers, than any kind of modern literature. There is, of course, a difference which at once limits even this imperfect analogy, namely, that in Pindar's poetry, as in all Greek lyrics of the best age, the words were paramount, and the music subordinate. But the comparison between the Pindaric ode and the oratorio, so far as it is valid at all, does not depend on the relation between words and music. It turns rather on those rapid transitions from one tone of feeling to another, from storm to calm, from splendid energy to tranquillity, from triumphant joy to reflection or even to sadness, which in Pindar are so frequent and so rapid that they are reconciled with art only by the



massive harmonies of rhythm and language which hold them together; harmonies for which two conditions were indispensable,—a language with the unrivalled qualities of the Greek, and an artist supremely distinguished by rhythmical and musical power over words. No Greek except Pindar succeeded in making such harmonies; Pindar himself could hardly have made them in any modern tongue. For, in the higher poetry, especially when it employs the grand style, the movement of every modern language is slower than that of Greek. But modern music allows of transitions from mood to mood as varied and almost as rapid as Pindar's; and here again it is the framework of harmony which makes them possible.

It has been the tendency of much criticism, both ancient and modern, to convey the impression that Pindar's genius is of that impetuous kind which scorns all restraints of traditional rule, rushes onward without premeditation or pause, and wins its triumphs by the sheer vehemence of masterful inspiration. Horace has done much to diffuse this conception of the Theban poet by comparing him to the mountain stream, swollen with rains, which has overflowed its banks, and rushes downward in a thunderous torrent. In modern times, it was not until Boeckh and Dissen

Pindar as an
artist.

had brought order out of the apparent chaos of his metres that this notion of his lawlessness began to be dissipated. Every one of his odes is, in fact, a work of the most elaborate and complex art, calculated and refined to the smallest detail. It is enough to mention three things out of several which demanded the artist's thought and tact.

First, as the compass of the ode is usually moderate,—the fourth Pythian being the only one which exceeds five triads,—he had to plan a symmetrical distribution of his material, so that proem, central part, and ending should be rightly proportioned to each other. And if, as was usually the case, some heroic myth was to be introduced, he had to consider the links with such myths which could be furnished by the family of the victor, or by the victor's city, or by some circumstance of the victory itself. Secondly, he had to decide the musical mode to which the poem was to be set. The Dorian mode breathed a grave, earnest, manly spirit; the Aeolian was more joyous and animated, with the tone of brilliant and chivalrous festivity; the Lydian, which Pindar uses more rarely, had a tender and pensive character, suited to dirges. Each style of music had certain metres which were specially congenial to it. Thirdly, the choice of musical mode and of metre affected the complexion of

the dialect. Pindar's dialect is, in its basis, the same as that which Stesichorus adopted when he set the first example of treating heroic themes in lyric form. It is the epic, a variety shaped by poetical artists, and not corresponding exactly with any spoken idiom. But Pindar tempers this with Dorisms, or Aeolisms,—Asiatic rather than Boeotian Aeolisms,—in varying proportions, according to the musical style and the metre in which he is writing.

These three points suffice to show that Pindar, in composing an *epinikion*, was an artist working under manifold demands on observance of rule and tradition. The most careful thought, the nicest care, were required at every step. Stress must be laid upon this aspect of his work, because it is apt to be overlooked. But there is, of course, another aspect also. The torrent is not a good simile, but the boldness of Pindar's original genius is evident. The only reason which moderns could find for doubting it is that he so often asserts it. It must be remembered, however, that Pindar is the inspired poet, who feels, as a Greek of his age would feel, that his gift was strictly divine,—that Apollo or the Muse is speaking through his lips,—and that to exalt his own gift is to honour the divinity who bestows it. Certainly it cannot

His bold
originality.

have been altogether pleasant to be a minor poet in Pindar's time : he tells these struggling contemporaries, with a sublime candour, that he is the eagle, while they are ravens and daws. The impression given by Pindar's style is that he is borne onward by the breath of an irresistible power within him, eager to find ample utterance, immense in resources of imagery and expression, sustained on untiring wings. After the longest and highest flight he always seems to have strength in reserve ; after the largest manifestations of his opulent fancy we can feel that there is inexhaustible wealth behind. It is the union of this mighty spirit and this magnificent abundance with the Greek artist's disciplined instinct of self-control and symmetry that renders Pindar unique.

Particular notice is due to the stamp of his diction. Other great poets have been distinguished by more delicate felicity, ^{Pindaric diction.} more chastened beauty of phrase, more faultless and unimpeachable taste. Sappho and Simonides, to take only lyric examples, exhibit even in the few fragments that remain certain charms of this kind which Pindar lacks ; but there is one gift in which he is absolutely alone. It is one which could find full scope only within the grand framework of the Dorian choral lyric,—the faculty of

shaping magnificent phrases, and giving them exactly their right setting in the spacious verse, so that they at once delight the ear and charm the imagination. Consider, for instance, the line describing how Jason, protected by Medea's spells, was able to harness the fire-breathing bulls :—

εἵχετ' ἔργου· πῦρ δέ νιν οὐκ ἐόλει παμφαρμάκου
ξείνας ἐφετμαῖς.

Who but Pindar could have put the last three words together? In these carven marble blocks of language we often find some stately epithet, perhaps fashioned by the poet himself, as in ἀστέων ῥίζαν φυτεύσεσθαι μελησίμβροτον. But even the commonest words can be thus moulded by him into forms which haunt the memory; as when Medea says, referring to the piece of Libyan earth that was lost overboard from the Argo,—

ἐναλίαν βάμεν σὺν ἄλμα
ἐσπέρας, ὑγρῷ πελάγει σπομέναν.

It is in some of these phrases, where Pindar has used long compound words, that he has more especially given occasion for the charge of bombast. Voltaire called him 'this inflated Theban,' and said that Pindar's French translator, M. de Chaumont, had endowed the turgid Greek with such clearness and beauty as he could claim. Mr

Matthew Arnold describes Pindar as 'the poet on whom, above all other poets, the power of style seems to have exercised an inspiring and intoxicating effect,'—which implies at least a certain absence of due self-restraint. Few would contend that Pindar's marvellous wealth of ideas and words never betrayed him into excess. One remembers what Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare: 'He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent fancy, brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped.' Yet one would have been sorry, on the whole, to have had Shakespeare regulated by Ben Jonson; and surely we may be glad that Pindar was not governed by a modern standard of lyric sobriety. But what I wish to point out here is the intimate relation between the rhythmical structure of Pindar's odes and that moulding of phrases in which he is a very Michael Angelo of language. Learn a few strophes of the fourth Pythian by heart, carefully studying the metre at the same time, and then you will apprehend, more clearly than before, two things,—the plastic power over words which Pindar wields, and the extent to which even those phrases which modern criticism might deem somewhat turgid—*ποικιλοφόρμιγγος*

doîdâs, for instance—are excused by the fact that they harmonize with the genius of these spacious measures which sustain the majestic structure of the Dorian ode. If we could hear such an ode performed with the music to which it was wedded by Pindar, this relation would undoubtedly be still more apparent.

The power of poetry is inseparable, in Pindar's thought, from the power of music, and both are symbolized by the lyre,—‘joint possession,’ as he calls it, ‘of Apollo and the Muses.’ ‘O golden lyre; joint possession of Apollo and the dark-haired Muses, thou at whose bidding the dancer's step begins the festal dance, thou whose signs the singers obey, when thy quivering notes raise the prelude of the choral song! Thou canst quench even the thunder-bolt, whose spear is of perennial fire; and the eagle, king of birds, slumbers on the sceptre of Zeus, suffering his swift wings to droop at his sides; for thou hast sent a mist of darkness on his arched head, a gentle seal upon his eyes, and he heaves his back with the rippling breath of sleep, spell-bound by thy trembling strains. Yea, the violent god of war forgets the cruel sharpness of his spears, and yields his melting soul to slumber; for thy shafts subdue the minds of the

His feeling
for the power
of music.
Invocation
of the lyre
(*Pyth.* i.).

immortals, by virtue of the art which is from Leto's son and the deep-bosomed Muses.

'But all creatures that Zeus loves not are dismayed when they hear the music of the Pierides, whether on land or on the raging deep; as that foe of the gods who lies in fearful Tartarus, Typhon of the hundred heads, reared of old in the famed Cilician cave. But now Sicily and the sea-restraining cliffs above Cumae press down his shaggy breast, and a pillar of heaven holds him fast, even hoary Aetna, nurse of keen snow through all the year; whose secret depths hurl upward pure fountains of unapproachable fire; in the day-time those rivers pour forth a stream of lurid smoke, but in the darkness a red rolling flame sweeps rocks with a roar to the wide deep.'

We observe here Pindar's feeling for what is grand or terrible in nature, one which elsewhere finds only limited expression in Greek poetry of this age. Thus Aeschylus, who also speaks of Aetna in eruption, emphasizes rather its destructive effect on human labour: 'Rivers of fire shall break forth, rending with fierce fangs the level meads of fruitful Sicily.' Nor is Pindar less in sympathy with gentler aspects of natural beauty. In the fragment of a dithyramb he speaks of the season 'when the chamber of the Hours is opened, and nectar-

His sense of grandeur or beauty in nature.

breathing plants perceive the fragrant spring. Then are the lovely tufts of violets strewn over the divine earth; then are roses twined in the hair, and voices of songs sound to the flute, and choruses chant of bright-wreathed Semele.'

Those verses may remind us of the goddesses who were often represented as young maidens decking themselves with vernal flowers,—the Charites, or Graces. They are the deities who give all things that can rejoice or refine the human spirit, who lend a crowning charm to victory and festivity, who throw a gentle radiance over every form of art, and who are therefore also goddesses of song, especially of such song as Pindar's. His tribute to the power of music should be associated

with his invocation of the Charites:

The Charites
(*Olymp.*
xiv.).

'Illustrious queens of bright Orchomenus, who watch over the old Minyan folk, hear me, ye Graces, when I pray! For by your help come all things glad and sweet to mortals, whether wisdom is given to any man, or beauty, or renown. Yea, the gods ordain not dance or feast apart from the majesty of the Graces. The Graces control all things wrought in heaven; they have set their throne beside Pythian Apollo of the golden bow; they adore the everlasting godhead of the Olympian father.'

Pindar is never more truly Hellenic than when he mingles his celebration of human glory with reminders as to the limit of human destiny. The athlete who has won victory by painful self-discipline, the prince whose victory is an illustration of 'wealth set off by virtues,' like gold set with gems more precious still, have won a noble reward, a very light of life, which burns most brightly when the poet has given them enduring renown. But they, too, must remember Nemesis. 'No mortal can find a path, by sea or land, to the Hyperboreans: no mortal can climb the brazen sky.' 'Let a man remember that his raiment is worn on mortal limbs, and that the earth shall be his vesture at the last.' 'Forecasts of the future are doomed to blindness.' 'The hopes of men are tossed up and down, as they cleave the waves of disappointment.' Such sentiments do not, however, cast any prevailing shadow over Pindar's poetry. They serve rather to limit the human horizon, without discouraging effort, or veiling the sunshine which requites it. Definite as are the bounds of man's lot, he still, as Pindar says, 'has some likeness to the immortals, perchance in lofty mind, perchance in form.' Pindar has summed up his view in these words: 'Things of a day! what are we? what

His views of human life.

are we not? Man is a shadow, a dream. But when the glory of victory has come, the gift of heaven, then a clear light rests on men, and their life is serene.'

Simonides, in his dirges, seems to have dwelt chiefly on the pathos of death; Pindar, in the most famous fragment of this class, pictures the bliss of

the life in Elysium: 'The strength of
Elysium.
the sun shines for them in that world, while it is night with us; the space before their city, amid crimson-flowered meadows, has shade of frankincense trees and wealth of golden fruits. Some of them take their pleasure with horses or in feats of strength, and some with dice, and some with harps; all fair-flowering bliss thrives among them, and fragrance streams ever through the lovely land, as they mingle incense manifold on the altars of the gods, with far-seen fire.'

The last aspect of Pindar's work which claims our notice is one of the most interesting, —the relation in which he stands to epos on the one side, and to drama on the other. The scanty fragments of Stesichorus, no less than the notices of him by ancient writers, suggest that his treatment of the heroic myths, though lyric in form, was distinctly epic in manner; that is, it consisted largely of continuous narra-

Pindar's
relation to
epic poetry.

tive. The most epic of Pindar's odes is the fourth Pythian, where he tells the story of the Argonauts. Of the two hundred and ninety-nine verses in this ode, the actual story of the Argonauts—apart from Medea's prophecy which is prefixed to it—fills about one hundred and eighty verses. If Pindar's method here—where he makes his nearest approach to epos—be compared with the epic, it will be seen that there are two principal differences. First, he brings out particular moments of the story—single scenes or episodes—with a vividness surpassing that of epic narrative. He succeeds in doing so by the terse brilliancy of his style, which is often marvellously picturesque, and by the short pieces of direct speech which serve to dramatize the speakers.

What could be more graphic, for instance, than the picture of the youthful Jason when he suddenly appeared in the market-place of Iolcus, wearing the close-fitting dress of a hunter in the Magnesian forests, with a leopard's skin over it, while his long bright hair streamed down his back? 'He went straight on, and stood in the market-place when the crowd was fullest, putting his dauntless spirit to the proof. They knew not who he was; but one or another of the awe-struck folk was moved




to say, 'Surely this is not Apollo, no, nor Aphrodite's lord, of the brazen chariot; and 'tis said that the sons of Iphimedeia have their graves in bright Naxos, even Otus, and thou, bold king Ephialtes. Yea, and Tityos hath fallen by the swift arrow of Artemis, sped from her invincible quiver, that mortals should not long for loves that are beyond their reach.' Thus the people spake to one another.' How vivid, again, is the picture of the moment when the ship Argo is about to sail from Iolcus, with her crew of heroes, and Jason, at the stern, pours his libation to Zeus, after the weighing of the anchor! 'The chief took a golden goblet in his hands, and called on Zeus, whose spear is the lightning, and on the rushing strength of waves and winds, and on the nights, and the paths of the deep; and prayed for kindly days, and friendly fortune of return. Then a favouring voice of thunder pealed in answer from the clouds, and bright flashes of lightning came bursting through them; and the heroes were comforted, putting faith in the signs of the god.'

This, then, is the first distinction of Pindar here,—the force with which he portrays certain moments. The second is the swiftness with which he glides over all those parts of the story which

it does not suit him to elaborate. After the description of Jason ploughing with the dread oxen of Aeëtes, and how he was shown the place where the dragon guarded the golden fleece, Pindar thus cuts the story short: 'Tis long for me to tread the well-worn track; yea, and I know a speedy path; I have shown the ways of song to many.' Then he suddenly apostrophizes Arcesilas, the prince to whom the ode is addressed, and tells, in only four lines, how Jason slew the dragon, won the fleece, and sailed home with Medea and his comrades.

Continuous epic narrative no longer sufficed for Pindar's contemporaries. The men who had lived through the Persian wars, and who took delight in the national games, had a quickened power of imagining strenuous action. The heroes of the past were believed to have mingled with the Greek warriors, and to have aided them in beating back the foe on sea and land. Pindar's age turned to the heroic legends with a desire to seize each particular episode as vividly as possible, and to bring the heroes into a closer relation with its own life. This tendency, of which the fourth Pythian is the greatest example, can be seen in other odes, also, where Pindar treats, more briefly, some one situation or incident taken from the legends. Such



is the picture of the nymph Cyrene, the warlike huntress in the mountain dells of Pindus, who, in Pindar's words, 'loved not the pacings to and fro before the loom.' And once, he says, 'as she struggled alone, without spear, against a fierce lion, far-darting Apollo, lord of the wide quiver, found her; and straightway he called Cheiron from his dwelling, and spake unto him: 'Son of Philyra, come forth from thy holy cave, and marvel at the spirit of this woman, and at her great might,—what battle she wages here with intrepid brow,—a maiden with heart too high for toil to quell; her soul is shaken by no tempest of fear. What man begat her? From what stock was she reft, to dwell in the secret places of the shadowy hills?''

The nymph
Cyrene
(*Pyth.* ix.).

Or, again, take the description of Heracles, as an infant, strangling the serpents which Hera had sent to destroy him and his brother Iolaus in their cradle. When the serpents appear there is a general panic: Alcmena's handmaids are distracted; warriors come rushing in with swords. But lo! 'the boy Heracles lifted up his head, and began the fight: he seized the two serpents by their necks in his sure grasp, and, as he strangled them, time forced the breath out of their monstrous forms.' Then Amphitryon sends

The infant
Heracles
(*Nem.* i.).

for the seer Teiresias, who prophesies the child's great future: 'how many lawless shapes of violence he should destroy on land and sea; how he should give to death those hatefulest of men who walk in guile and insolence;' and how, at last, for reward of his toils; 'he should receive fair Hebe for his bride, and hold his marriage feast in the house of Zeus, well pleased with that dwelling-place divine.' The whole picture of this scene around the cradle is masterly,—the spectators, first terrified, and then full of joyful amazement, and the calm prescience of the seer. Not less so is that scene from the later life of Heracles, when he is the guest of Telamon in Aegina, and prays to his divine father that the wish of Telamon's heart may be granted: 'Then Heracles stretched forth to heaven his unconquer-
Heracles predicts the birth of Ajax (Isthm. v.).
able hands, and spake thus: 'O father Zeus, if ever thou hast heard my prayers with willing heart, I pray thee now, even now, with strong entreaty, that thou give this man a brave child of Eriboea,—a son, strong of body, even as this lion's hide that floats around me, stripped from the beast that I slew in Nemea of old, first of my labours; and may he have a soul to match.' When Heracles had so spoken, the god sent forth the king of birds, a mighty eagle, and sweet pleasure thrilled through

the hero, and he spake as a prophet speaks: 'Telamon, thou shalt have the son whom thou desirest; and after the name of the bird that has appeared, call him Ajax: great shall be his might, and he shall be terrible in the strife of warring host.'

Let us remember that the setting of these pictures is the ode of victory. No other form of Greek poem was so intimately bound up with the energies of the present; Pindar's verse throbs

with all those pulses of Hellenic life
Affinity of Pindar's spirit to that of Attic drama. which were stirred by the great festivals.

When the heroes of the past were introduced into such an ode; when they were made, as Pindar makes them, to stand out before the fancy in deed and word,—then the character of the poem itself gave those persons a new meaning. There might be some implied parallelism between the ancient hero and the living victor; or the association might be limited to the fact that both were celebrated in the same choral ode. But, in either case, the poetical juxtaposition had a two-fold effect. It threw an ideal light around the living victor; and it also invested the legendary hero with a new reality. The hero was now drawn within the circle of contemporary interests: those who listened to a choral ode of Pindar, with the Olympian victor whom it glorified present to their

eyes, gained a more vivid conception of his heroic prototype.

Thus the lyric poetry of Pindar lends a new vitality to the epic tradition. This vivid sympathy with heroic action, stimulated by the struggles of the present, and yet lifted above it, is the same which received its final expression in the Attic drama. Before Pindar's career was closed Aeschylus had passed away; Sophocles and Euripides were the rising masters of tragedy. It would be misleading to exaggerate the degree of kinship between the spirit of their work and that of Pindar. But, in the sense which has been defined, a true affinity exists. Pindar, the greatest of the Greek lyrists,—the most wonderful, perhaps, in lofty power, that the lyric poetry of any age can show,—holds his title to immortality by the absolute quality of his work; but for the history of Greek literature he has also the relative interest of showing the epic heroes under a new light,—neither that far-off, though clear, light, as of a fair sunset, which the lay of the minstrel shed around them in the palace of Alcinous, nor yet that searching sunshine of noontide which fell upon them in the theatre of Dionysus.

VI

THE ATTIC DRAMA

WE have seen how the Dorian choral lyric, as handled by Stesichorus and his successors, had clothed the old epic legends in a new form; one which was peculiarly congenial to the widely spread Dorian family, but which was welcomed also by Hellenes to whom the spirit of Ionian epos had been either alien or unsatisfying. It was a particular species of the choral lyric which, in turn, became the parent of the Attic drama.

Origin of
Attic Drama. In drama the heroic myths were once more animated with a new life,—different from that which had been given to them in Ionia, different also from the lyric, and yet preserving elements of both. When Aeschylus created Tragedy, he became, for the Athens and the Hellas of his day, truly a second Homer.

Drama sprang from the species of lyric poem called the dithyramb. The dithyramb. The dithyramb is mentioned first by Archilochus, who describes it as the ‘beautiful song of Dionysus,

and boasts that he knows how to raise that song when inspired by wine. It appears, then, that the dithyramb was originally a convivial song, definitely associated with the god Dionysus. It may also be inferred that it was originally sung by one voice; it belonged to the 'monodic' class of lyrics. The Greeks seem to have received the cult of Dionysus from Thrace, a region well known to Archilochus; and the dithyramb probably came along with the cult. The etymology of the word is unknown. It is conjectured that the first syllable, *di*, represents the root of *δῖος*, etc. (compare *διπύλῃα*), and that the word 'dithyramb' meant a divine or excellent *θύραμβος*. The latter word, also in the form *θρίαμβος*, occurs as the name of a song or dance; but its origin remains uncertain.

A song to the wine-god, sung under his influence, had presumably a wild, impassioned character, and was accompanied with gesticulation. It would thus have presented a strong contrast to the tranquil and solemn *nomos*, 'nome,' chanted to Apollo, with which the improved music of Terpander was peculiarly associated. Of the two styles, that which the nome exhibited was the better suited to the Hellenic nature. The dithyramb, in its original form, would have been less Hellenic than oriental. It is not surprising, then, that

while the nome appears at the beginning of the lyric period, the dithyramb was the last lyric species which received an artistic development.

This development was due to Arion, of
Arion.

Methymna in Lesbos, who probably belonged to the Lesbian school of citharodes founded by Terpander. Corinth was the place at which Arion produced his choral dithyrambs; he had been invited to the court of Periander, who was tyrant of Corinth from about 628 to 585 B.C. A luxurious and pleasure-loving city, Corinth already knew the worship of Dionysus, and was generally well disposed towards novelties of an oriental character. The chorus which sang a dithyramb was designated in the fifth century as a *κύκλιος χορός*, a circular chorus, probably because it moved in dance round the circular orchestra, in contradistinction to the tragic chorus, drawn up facing the actors. In the time of Simonides the number of such a chorus was fifty, and this number may have dated from Arion. But the work of Arion was not merely to make the dithyramb choral. His chorus,

The satyr
chorus.

we are told, was composed of satyrs. A chorus so composed was called a *τραγικὸς χορός*. The word *τράγος*, 'goat,' is used by Aeschylus in a fragment of one of his satyr plays as a synonym for 'satyr.' Such 'goat' or 'satyr'

choruses had existed in the Peloponnesus before Arion's time. At Sicyon, about 600 B. C., they pertained to a festival in honour of the hero Adrastus; and Cleisthenes, who was then tyrant of Sicyon, is said to have transferred them from the cult of Adrastus to the cult of Dionysus. The words in which Herodotus relates this (v. 67) imply that, in his belief at least, the satyr chorus had previously belonged to the cult of Dionysus, and that Cleisthenes was merely vindicating the right of the deity to an honour which had been temporarily alienated from his worship. When Arion formed his dithyrambic chorus of satyrs, he was assigning the song of Dionysus to specially appropriate performers, who stood in a recognized relation to that god. And he was also making the performance something more lively, more characteristic, than an ordinary choral song. Still, there was nothing as yet properly dramatic in such an entertainment.

The dithyrambic chorus, performed by satyrs, came to Athens during the brilliant reign of Peisistratus, about the middle of the sixth century. At this period the cult of Dionysus had already gained a strong hold upon Attica. Peisistratus favoured a popular and growing taste by establishing a new festival of the god, more consider-

able than any which then existed,—the Great Dionysia, celebrated in the later spring, towards the end of March. The dithyrambic chorus was now added to the regular attractions of this festival.

The Great
Dionysia.

The next step towards the creation of drama was that which is associated with the name of Thespis. At the great Dionysia of 534 B. C., Thespis, in producing a dithyrambic chorus, came forward as a reciter of verses, addressing his chorus of satyrs, and doubtless personating a satyr himself. The iambic verse had been at home in Attica since Solon's time, and here was a ready-made vehicle for a lively address, humorous or satirical. The satirical iambics of Archilochus and others had furnished models. The new departure thus combined an Ionian element with the Dorian choral lyric; and that combination was enduring. But even then the entertainment fell short of being dramatic. The reciter of verses who addressed the dithyrambic chorus could indeed relate action. But action could not yet be represented as taking place before the eyes of the spectators.

Thespis.

In the obscure interval between Thespis and Aeschylus, the most important name is that of Phrynichus. Two of his best-known

Phrynichus.

pieces were founded upon contemporary events. One of these pieces dealt with the capture of Miletus by the Persians at the close of the Ionian revolt. The other, entitled the *Phoenissae*, turned upon the battle of Salamis. In each the chorus was, of course, the dominant feature; the catastrophe was related to them by the single reciter.

Aeschylus, born in or about 525 B.C., is said to have made his first appearance as a poet about 500 B.C., and to have gained ^{Aeschylus.} the first prize at the Dionysia some sixteen years later, about 484 B.C. The entertainment which he found existing was such as Thespis had made it,—a goat-song, or 'tragedy,' which was still essentially lyric, and not yet properly dramatic. Instead of the single reciter, Aeschylus introduced two persons, both, like the single reciter, detached from the chorus. These two persons could hold a dialogue, and could represent action. By this change, Aeschylus altered the whole character of the lyric tragedy, and created a drama. The dialogue between the two actors now ^{The founder of Drama.} became the dominant feature of the entertainment; the part of the lyric chorus, though still very important, had now only a diminished importance.

In reading the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, written
fifty years after the death of Aeschylus,
Testimony
of Aristophanes. we see his place in Athenian memory.

That comedy is an inestimable document, of which the historical value is not impaired by the free play of humour and of fancy ; it is nearer, both in time and in spirit, to the age of Aeschylus, and is far more instructive, than any other document that we possess. There we catch an echo of the sweet lyrics of Phrynichus,—of those ‘native wood-notes wild’ which he had warbled as if the birds had taught him,—a music dying away in the distance of that century’s earliest years,—the lyrics of which elderly men had heard their fathers speak with delight. And there, too, rises before us a living image of the majestic poet who had come after Phrynichus, the poet who, first of the Hellenes, had built up a stately diction for Tragedy, and also invested it with external grandeur ; the poet who had described the battle of Salamis as he had seen it ; whose lofty verse had been inspired by the wish to nourish the minds of his fellow-citizens with ennobling ideals, to make them good men and true, worthy of their fathers and their city ; the poet to whom many an Athenian, sick at heart with the decay of patriotism and with the presage of worse to come, looked back,

amidst regret for the recent loss of Sophocles and Euripides, as to one who had been not only the creator of the Attic drama, but also in his own person an embodiment of that manly and victorious Athens which was for ever passing away.

Before turning to the individual characteristics of the three tragic masters, it may be well to touch briefly on the nature of Attic Tragedy itself, as it was determined in its essential features by Aeschylus.

The first point which claims notice is the relation of Attic Tragedy to epos. Aeschylus, or some one who understood him, said that his tragedies were morsels from Homer's great feast. It was Aeschylus who decided, once for all, that the proper and distinctive material of tragedy was to be found in the heroic legends. The rule did not preclude an occasional exception, such as the *Persae*, but it was of general validity, and was maintained as long as Attic Tragedy lasted. And it was not an arbitrary rule. The heroic world was that in which, for the Greeks, the deeds and sufferings of humanity were raised to an ideal nobleness, an ideal pathos. A Greek who desired that his drama should lift men's minds into that region,—that it should nobly

Nature of
Attic Tra-
gedy.

Its material.

move and nobly teach them,—could go to no other fountain-head than Homeric epos. The age of Aeschylus regarded epos as history. Later history could also, doubtless, supply tragic themes. The fortunes of the last Lydian king, as Herodotus narrates them, would have furnished such a theme; what could be more tragic than the fate of Croesus, lured towards the eastern bank of the Halys by a divine voice which he had not understood, and, in his abasement, even under the shadow of death, bringing the lessons of his own destiny home to the mind of his Persian conqueror? But, in that picture of the past which lived before the imagination of the men who had fought at Salamis, no heroic glory lit up the period between Homer and themselves. Such glory played around the captors of Troy, and a true kinship with those conquerors of Priam was felt by the conquerors of Xerxes; but if Attic Tragedy was not to idealize the heroism which the contemporaries of Aeschylus had enacted, then it must go back to the heroism which the traditions of their ancestors had consecrated. The limits of epos—not absolutely of its actual themes, but at least of its spirit—were the limits of Attic Tragedy; the essence of that Tragedy was in viewing the heights of the past from the heights of the present, so blending them

in a single imaginative view that the heroic past became, in very truth, the present.

And this brings us to another point which should be remembered. Modern criticism, introspective and analytic, has pondered Its didactic quality—how limited. particular sayings of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides; it has brought these sayings together, arranged them under heads, digested them into formulas, linked them by ingenious reconciliations, until, for each of the three dramatists, it has evolved a certain body of philosophy or theosophy. Such efforts have an interest and a value of their own. But the artificial method involves a danger of representing the thought of these poets as more systematic than it really was. When Aeschylus, for instance, took a subject from the heroic epos, and made it into a play or a trilogy, his paramount aim was to present his story in the most effective and vivid manner,—that which seemed to him most beautiful and most impressive. He was a poet and an artist moved by the god to give dramatic embodiment to those great forms,—human, but raised above common humanity,—from whom the Hellenes traced their lineage, and through whom their lineage ascended to the gods of their race. Stirred by that great endeavour, he poured forth the deepest thoughts and feelings

which his life had bred in him; yes, and felt himself called to be a teacher—to move the minds and nourish the hearts of his people. But these thoughts and sentiments, which he uttered as the course of the drama suggested, do not warrant the assumption that the poet had a definite and coherent system of doctrine in his mind. If, for example, Aeschylus could be examined on his views of the relations between fate and free will, modern criticism would possibly find his answers vague and unsatisfactory—far less ingenious, too, than the answers which moderns have devised on his behalf. As for the Athenian spectators in the theatre, they went to see the heroes in bodily presence, and to hear their living voices; they went to see what Aeschylus would make Agamemnon do and say. They looked also to hear wise thoughts from actors or from chorus, and they welcomed such wisdom, which worked upon them mainly by deepening beliefs with which they were already imbued. Each of the great dramatists coloured the collective experience of Hellenes with his own views of life, and gave prominence to certain thoughts of his own; but, in so far as Attic Tragedy was directly didactic, the larger part of what it did consist in clothing received Hellenic maxims with forms of new energy and beauty.

A third point which is of some moment, if we wish to apprehend the spirit of Attic Tragedy, is the general nature of the character-drawing. It is a familiar ob-
Its portraiture of character.
 servation that the characters of Attic Tragedy are rather types than individuals: and this is true in a relative sense; it is true for *us*, who are accustomed to a portraiture of character more minute, fuller of individualizing touches, than any which Attic Tragedy attempted. Our standard in dramatic portraiture is the Shakespearian; the Aeschylean Clytaemnestra might be described as typical rather than individual, in comparison with Lady Macbeth; so might the Sophoclean Oedipus, in comparison with Lear. Nevertheless, when we study Clytaemnestra or Oedipus, we feel not only the breadth and vividness of the poetical conception, but also the number of fine touches by which the effect has been aided. In speaking of 'types,' then, we must guard against seeming to mean that Clytaemnestra was to Aeschylus, or Oedipus to Sophocles, merely the abstract representative of a certain genus. Each of them was, to the creator, a living individual, definitely and vividly conceived; only the ideal aim of Attic Tragedy imposed a certain restraint upon details, when this individual was to be presented in action and

speech. Here, once more, it is the relation of Attic Tragedy to epos that gives us the right gauge. Epos was narrative, dealing with a large compass of material. The conditions of such narrative seldom permitted the epic poet to elaborate pictures of character. The most highly individualized persons of Homeric epos are perhaps Zeus and Hera, whose domestic dissensions are favourable to that result; then Achilles and Odysseus; and then perhaps Nausicaa. But these are exceptional; most of the epic characters are hardly more than adumbrated. Attic Tragedy received its persons from epos, with only a few salient traits prescribed,—sometimes scarcely even so much. Within these mere outlines, the characters were, as a rule, created by the Attic dramatists themselves. Each dramatist could use his own discretion; he was not even bound to be consistent with himself; the Creon of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is different from the Creon of the *Coloneus*; so is the Helen of the *Helena* from that of the *Orestes*. Still less did one dramatist feel bound by another's conception; witness the *Electra* of Sophocles and the *Electra* of Euripides. But when the creative period of Greek poetry was closed; when the literary poets of a later age, Greek or Roman, looked back on the Attic drama

as a whole ; then it was recognized that the heroic persons had there been delineated once for all. The characters as drawn in Attic Tragedy were for these later writers the standard conceptions. Clytaemnestra, Oedipus, and the rest had received from the Attic dramatist certain attributes which thenceforth adhered to them. Horace reminds us of this in the *Ars Poetica* ; and Seneca's plays practically illustrate Horace. Thus Attic Tragedy became to the later literature nearly what epos had been to Tragedy. Epos had prescribed outlines which Tragedy had filled in,—observing, while it did so, the limitations imposed by the first law of its being, its ideal scope ; and these characters became traditional,—without receiving, however, any further development comparable with that which Tragedy had effected.

Remembering these general qualities of Attic Tragedy, we may next consider the particular stamp impressed upon it by each of the great masters. Among the seven extant plays of Aeschylus, the oldest is the *Supplices*, which has been conjecturally placed a year or two before the battle of Marathon. Whatever its precise date may be, it undoubtedly has the interest of showing us the creator of Tragedy at a comparatively early mo-

Distinctive
traits of the
three mas-
ters.

Aeschylus.

ment in his career ; as the *Oresteia*, near the end of his life, shows us the climax of his achievement. When the work of Aeschylus is viewed in regard to its form, the first broad characteristic which

His use of
the Chorus.

claims notice is his treatment of the Chorus. In the *Supplices*, the Chorus is the true protagonist. We are reminded of the time, then recent, before Aeschylus had introduced the second actor, when Tragedy had been essentially lyric. And in that choral ode of the *Supplices* which invokes blessings upon Dorian Argos, there is a significant reference to Dorian lyric poetry, as composed, in various kinds, for public ritual ; 'May the singers raise holy song at the altars, and may the chant, wedded to the harp, be poured from pure lips.' The Danaides, who form the Chorus of the *Supplices*, were regularly represented as fifty in number ; and it is not improbable that, in this play, the Chorus consisted of fifty persons,—the number, as we have seen, of the cyclic or dithyrambic Chorus. The chorus of only twelve, used in the later plays of Aeschylus,—representing roughly one quarter of the cyclic chorus,—may have come in along with the tetralogy, presumably his invention. In no other play is the Chorus quite so important as in the *Supplices* ; yet in each of the other six, besides

bearing a large part, it has also a real share in the action. Thus in the *Prometheus* the Ocean Nymphs are not merely the comforters of the sufferer, who remain with him throughout; at the end they defy the Olympian threats, and resolve to share his doom. The Persian Elders in the *Persæ* represent the nation smitten at Salamis, and interpret the effect of the battle upon Asia. In the *Seven against Thebes* the Theban maidens are so closely interested in the events that at the end they even divide into two factions, one siding with Antigone and the other with Ismene. The Elders of Mycenæ in the *Agamemnon* are outspoken opponents of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. In the *Choephoroi* the Chorus of captive maidens assist the vengeance; and the *Eumenides*, in the play called after them, have a part second only, if second, to that of *Orestes*.

As a lyric poet, in his choral odes, *Æschylus* has a strongly-marked style, which must be recognised as altogether his own; the ^{His style in lyrics.} history of the choral lyric, so far as we know, shows nothing resembling it as a whole, nor is there anything like it in the later dramatists. A typical example of this style is afforded by the first two odes in the *Agamemnon*. We find there

three principal characteristics. First, there is an epic tone, Homeric in its nobleness, and accordant with the hexameter rhythms which are so largely used; Homeric also in the variety and vivacity given to the narrative by short speeches like those of Calchas and Agamemnon. Secondly, the lyric expression is boldly imaginative, in a manner which sometimes recalls Pindar; thus there is a Pindaric rapidity in the succession of images and metaphors. Thirdly, there is an element of reflection, not practically sententious or didactic, as with Pindar, but rather the outcome of a deeply-brooding mind, with a mystic tinge. The lofty language in which these three qualities are blended exhibits varying harmonies between form and matter. At one moment it has the vigorous directness of Homeric narrative. At another it labours with the stress of conflicting thoughts, as in the verses which picture the anguish of Agamemnon. Or solemn emphasis and intense earnestness are expressed by a cumulative weight of phrase, as in the warning of Calchas:—

*μίμνει γὰρ φοβερά παλίνορτος
οἰκονόμος δολία μνάμων μῆνις τεκνόποιος.*

Again, plastic beauty and human pathos are marvellously united in the description of Iphigeneia, about to die at the altar, and in the passage pictur-

ing the desolation of Menelaus. It is needless to multiply illustrations from other plays; but we might mention the two odes of benediction—that of the Danaïdes for Argos and of the Eumenides for Athens—as examples of a gentle lyric charm: and, as marking the height of sublimity, that ode in which the Eumenides describe their own nature and office.

As in the lyrics of Tragedy, so also in dialogue, the style of Aeschylus is distinctive. He was not, indeed, the first who had lent ^{His style in dialogue.} dignity and beauty to the measures which tragic dialogue employs. Nearly two hundred years earlier, Archilochus had given a majestic rhythm to the trochaic tetrameter. A century before Aeschylus, Solon had written iambic trimeters, among which there are at least some lines not unworthy of Aeschylus himself. But it remained for the mighty spirit of Aeschylus to give the iambic trimeter a sustained grandeur which it had never possessed before. His style is always the grand style; yet it is not monotonous. He can use iambic verse with equal mastery for terse and vigorous narrative, as in describing the battle of Salamis; for declamation, as in the brilliant rhetoric of Clytaemnestra, or the stately oration of Athena; for concentrated invective, as when Apollo drives

the Furies from his temple ; for keen controversy, as in the trial of Orestes ; or for descriptive passages of tranquil beauty, as when Prometheus depicts the change which he had wrought on the primitive life of mankind. Towards the end of the fifth century B.C., it became the fashion of a new school to censure Aeschylus as bombastic. The extant plays do not justify the charge. They rather illustrate the phrase applied to him by the Aristophanic chorus in the *Frogs*. He has the *γῆγενὲς φύσημα*, the breath of a Titan ; his strength sustains his grandeur : he is often exuberant, but seldom turgid.

In the general view of the ancient world, Aeschylus was the supreme representative of dramatic inspiration, an inspiration sometimes too stormy and vehement to obey the law of the best art. This feeling is crudely expressed in the tradition preserved by Athenaeus, that Aeschylus wrote under the stimulus of wine, and by the saying ascribed (falsely, we may well believe) to Sophocles, that Aeschylus did right, but without knowing why. The author of the treatise on Sublimity attributed to Longinus similarly qualifies his estimate of the poet's genius.

To a modern mind, the most striking attribute of Aeschylus is the lofty force of his creative imagination. In the *Eumenides*, for

Ancient view
of his genius.

His creative
imagination.

instance, every reader is aware of this, and yet it is not easy for even the most appreciative modern student to realise all that such an achievement signified. The Olympian gods and goddesses were clearly defined forms, stronger and more beautiful men or women. But there were other supernatural beings whom the Greeks preferred to leave in a reverent obscurity; and of all such the most appalling were the Erinyes. To call those dread powers forth from the valley of the shadow into the open light of day, to clothe them in a visible shape, to show them in the very exercise of their awful prerogatives, announcing their own name, and asserting their office as avengers of blood,—this was a thing which, among Greeks, only an imagination of supreme boldness could have contemplated, and only an imagination of transcendent power could have accomplished.

Hardly less bold, and not less wonderful, is the feat achieved in the *Prometheus*. The only human person in that play is Io, whose destiny separates her from ordinary humanity. The other persons are Prometheus, sprung from the race of the Titans who had warred against Zeus, but himself one whose wisdom had helped to establish the new ruler's throne in heaven; Oceanus, the earth-girdling god of waters, borne through the air by a

winged creature to the Scythian wilderness where Prometheus is chained to storm-beaten cliffs; the Ocean-Nymphs, daughters of Oceanus and Tethys; the god Hephaestus, whose satellites, Strength and Force, aid him in executing the divine sentence; and Hermes, the messenger from Olympus. In the drama which Aeschylus has made with such beings, there is the sustained elevation which such a theme required; but there is also—and it is the combination which is so peculiarly Hellenic—a simplicity, a natural directness, which completes the triumph. The imaginative surroundings of the action are given with equal skill. There is no set description, but a few hints or passing touches call up a picture of the region in which Prometheus suffers,—the sky above, the boundless sea far off below, the desolate summits of the Caucasus between them; the frosty starlight of the nights, which only varied the torments of the victim; the driving snow, the raging wind, the thunderstorm and the earthquake. Vast and weird as is the vision, it is presented with Hellenic clearness of outline, with Hellenic obedience to the sense of measure and harmony.

His conception of character.

In his principal human characters, Aeschylus exhibits the same creative force. Clytaemnestra is born whole from his

brain ; she becomes known through her deeds and words, till her presence can be felt ; she acquires an atmosphere. How wonderfully her speech of welcome to Agamemnon, with its winding and glittering coils of rhetoric, makes us apprehend the hidden steadiness of her deadly purpose ! And with what terrible reality does her exultation burst forth after the murder, in a series of short, sharp sentences, when she stands before the elders of Mycenae, telling them how the blood upon her robe has freshly spurted from her husband's death-wound, and how she rejoices in it, as a cornfield in the rains of spring ! She is not merely the paramour of Aegisthus ; she is the agent of the Erinyes, who punishes Agamemnon for the slaughter of Iphigeneia. When she protests her confidence in the future, this is the sanction of her vow : 'by Justice that has avenged my daughter, by Atè, and by the Fury, the powers to whom I have slain this man.'

Like Clytaemnestra, each of the greater Aeschylean persons has an organic unity, shown in action even more than through fine touches of self-revealing speech. Reference for action to speech. Universally, Aeschylus prefers action to speech, where it is possible ; in this direct sense he is the most dramatic of the dramatists. The part of the

Messenger is less indispensable to him than to his successors. No messenger relates the murder of Agamemnon; it is the dying man's shriek, heard by the chorus from within, that announces the fulfilment of Cassandra's vision. Action, not merely explanatory dialogue or formal prologue, is his favourite opening for a play: the beacon flashes on the watcher's gaze at Mycenae; the Pythia finds the Eumenides in the temple, and the ghost of Clytemnaestra breaks their slumber.

In his theology, as in all else, Aeschylus is a Hellene of the Hellenes: he is no mono-
His theo-
logy. theist, yet he might be described as a monarchist in religion. Zeus is to him emphatically the king of the gods. His Olympus is a firmly ruled monarchy; for in the divine government of the world he finds a steadiness which implies unity of control; and, to the anthropomorphic mind, this unity again implies a supreme person. Behind and above Zeus himself is Fate. Zeus, says the Aeschylean Prometheus, is not the pilot of Necessity. But we must recollect that Greek polytheism had its historical perspective. The dynasty of Zeus had succeeded to older dynasties. At the time when Prometheus spoke, Zeus was new to power; Prometheus himself had helped to give him the victory, and Zeus was showing a kind

of Olympian arrogance; his new throne might still, in the workings of Fate, be shaken. This is, in fact, part at least of the answer to the problem which the Prometheus raises; there had been faults on the side of Zeus no less than on the other, and therefore there was a ground of compromise. But such a danger for Zeus belonged to the remote past. Aeschylus would have allowed that a collision between Zeus and Fate was conceivable in the abstract, but would have denied, probably, that such a conflict lay any longer within the horizon of human religion. Zeus represents, for Aeschylus, the supreme rule of the world, so far as men can form any clear notion of it :—


‘ Zeus, whosoe’er he be, if this name please his ear,
By this name I bid him hear;
Nought but Zeus my soul may guess,
Seeking far and seeking near,
Seeking who shall stay the stress
Of its fond and formless fear.’¹

And then follows an allusion to those two rulers who had preceded Zeus, namely Uranus and Cronus :—

‘ For he who long ago was great,
Filled with daring and with might,
Now is silent, lost in night;
And the next who took his state
Met *his* supplanter too, and fell, and passed from sight.’

To the mind of Aeschylus, who had seen the over-

¹ *Agam.* 160 ff., trans. by Ernest Myers.



throw of the Persian host, the divine judgment upon the violators of Hellenic shrines, Zeus was present not only as the god now established in supreme sway, but also as one who, in a far-off past, had striven against enemies, prevailed over competitors, beaten down the insolence of the earthborn.

Among the moral ideas which Aeschylus connects with religion, the dominant one
Retribution. is simple. It is the maxim *δράσαντι παθεῖν*, the belief that sin must be expiated by suffering. Zeus has shown men the way to wisdom; he has ordained that by suffering men shall learn. 'Know this for thy children and thy house: as thou buildest, such in time shall be thy recompense.' This idea takes a more complex form
The trans-
mitted curse. in the doctrine of the hereditary curse, the Erinyes of the family. Laïus, for instance, wrongs Pelops, and Pelops curses the race of Laïus. Oedipus, the son of Laïus, inherits that curse; but an act of his own is required to call the Erinyes into activity, and Oedipus unwittingly commits parricide and incest. Eteocles, the son of Oedipus, in turn sins against his father, and becomes subject to the curse. There is an element of mystic fatalism here, residing in the notion that a curse upon a whole race, once heard

by the gods, will insure each successive generation acting in such a manner as to continue the operation of the Erinyes. Aeschylus, we may suppose, simply accepted this belief. It is not probable that he had attempted to effect in his own mind any logical reconciliation between destiny and free will, much less that he could have stated any theory which would have stood the criticism of modern thought. This must remain a matter of speculation; but it is interesting to observe that as a poet he was unquestionably influenced by his creed of retribution for sin, and more particularly by the doctrine of the transmitted curse, in respect to his form of dramatic composition. Welcker distinguishes two kinds of trilogy used by Aeschylus. One is the fable-trilogy, ^{The trilogy.} in which the three plays are three successive chapters of one story as the Agamemnon, Choephoroi, Eumenides. The other is the theme-trilogy, in which the bond between the pieces is merely that of some general idea; thus the Suppliants, according to Welcker, belonged to a trilogy in which the connecting idea was that of Hellenic victory over the barbarian. The evidence for the theme-trilogy is somewhat shadowy, but there is no doubt that the fable-trilogy was the form which Aeschylus, presumably its creator, made distinc-

tively his own. Now, the fable-trilogy was evidently a congenial mode of composition for a dramatist whose imagination was so spacious, who loved to express character by great strokes of action, and whose sympathy with the genius of Homeric epos was so profound; but the fable-trilogy was also peculiarly suitable for the purpose of tracing the process by which, in the divine counsels, sin is followed, soon or late, by suffering; above all, when the aim of the poet was to show how the dread influence of the avenging Fury, once established over a guilty house, descends from generation to generation.

From the founder of Tragedy we may now turn to the poet who marks a further stage in its development. Sophocles was born in or about 496 B.C., being thus some twenty-nine years younger than Aeschylus. The ancient Greek world can show no other man in whom all the elements of good fortune, as a Greek conceived them, were united as they were in Sophocles. The gods, whom he loved and who loved him, gave him physical beauty; rare genius; a sufficiency of wealth; victories at the Dionysia, dating from his first appearance as a competitor, and lasting down to the end of a long life; distinc-

Sophocles :
his happy
life.

tion in the service of his country; the affection of his fellow-citizens, won by his character no less than by his achievements; an honoured old age, in the full vigour of his faculties; and a death which came at last opportunely, for by a few months only he was spared hearing that cry, the dirge of the imperial city, raised in the Peiræus and caught up from point to point through the line of the Long Walls, which announced the overthrow at the Hellespont; he was spared the sight of Athens besieged by a Peloponnesian fleet, and finally occupied by a Spartan garrison. Aeschylus had long ago died in Sicily; Euripides had found a grave in Macedonia; but Sophocles was laid to rest in his native land: and although embittered enemies were then established on Attic soil, their outposts respectfully opened a passage to the sad procession which moved along the road from Athens towards Deceleia, bearing the last of the great poets to the sepulchre of his fathers. A contemporary could thus sum up his life:—

‘Thrice happy Sophocles! In good old age,
Blessed as a man, and as a poet blessed,
He died; his many tragedies were fair,
And fair his end; nor knew he any sorrow.’

The most important change made by Sophocles in the form of Tragedy consisted in raising the number of actors from two

The third
actor.

to three. This was an innovation which Aeschylus could adopt, as in the *Oresteia*, without affecting the quality of his work; but in the hands of Sophocles the change had large consequences. These cannot be understood until we have first considered the differences of thought concerning men and gods which separate Sophocles from Aeschylus. Here lies the root of the difference between the types of drama which they created.

Aeschylus had vindicated the ways of heaven to men by insistence upon the great law which he regarded as all-pervading; when a man suffers, it is a divine nemesis upon sin. Zeus stedfastly upholds Righteousness. If you cannot discern how a sufferer has offended, or if his punishment seems too great for his offence, then go further back; search the history of his family; it will be found that somewhere there has been a sin. Thus the belief in destiny helped out the doctrine of retribution. Aeschylus put some strain on the facts of human experience, but at any rate he saved the justice of Zeus. Sophocles surveyed the spectacle of life with less prepossession and with a more tender sympathy. He was, like Aeschylus, a pious believer in the traditional religion of the Hellenes; but he held it in a form nearer to the received popular form

Ethical and
religious
views of
Sophocles.

than did Aeschylus. Zeus is not so steadily or uniformly paramount with Sophocles as he is with the elder poet. Apollo is often in the foreground, not as a mere mouthpiece of Zeus, but sometimes as a dispenser of good or ill. Athena, in the exercise of her own power, inflicts the chastisement upon Ajax. The idea of the hereditary curse is not strange to Sophocles; he sees it at work in the house of Pelops, in the house of Labdacus; but he makes it a less prominent agency than it is made by Aeschylus; it is enough to compare the Oedipus Tyrannus with the Seven against Thebes. As a rule, the Sophoclean person suffers either for what he himself has done—as Ajax for contempt of Athena—or else, being innocent, he suffers for no intelligible reason which the poet can assign, as Philoctetes does. The human lot is narrowly limited, and if a mortal trespasses on the limit, the jealousy of the gods will swiftly smite him. But more than this, /Sophocles the fortunate can declare that never to be born is the best lot, and the next best, to die as soon as may be after birth. Life is the shadow of a vapour, and old age is misery. In a word, Sophocles is profoundly impressed with the woes of humanity,—woes which may be due to no fault of a man's own. Yet he firmly believes in the goodness and

justice of the gods. He does not fall back on a half-mystic doctrine of nemesis. He leaves the problem unsolved. But he contributes at least one inestimable thought towards its solution. He teaches that suffering is not necessarily an evil. Suffering may educate and ennoble the character, as in the case of Oedipus. It may bring the victory of a cause which the sufferer prizes above life, as in the case of Antigone. Or, even if there can be nothing of comfort or compensation for the individual victim, his suffering may still have been ordained, in the hidden wisdom of just gods, for the good of mankind. Sophocles has been described, in well-known words, as one 'who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.' Those words, true of his dramatic art, are equally true of his religious and moral ideas. He saw the evil and sorrow that are in life as part of a divine scheme, which may, indeed, appoint such discipline for the good of the individual, but which also subordinates the welfare of the individual to welfare of the race.

How, then, did such thoughts influence the work of Sophocles as a dramatist? Aeschylus, with a grandeur and a breadth akin to those of heroic epos, showed the heroes in the great outlines of their action, fulfilling the destiny appointed for them by Zeus, and illus-

Influence of
these ideas
upon his art.

trating the eternal law of Righteousness. Sophocles believed not less in the fixity of the divine law; but he dwelt on less simple forms of its operation: when he contemplated human passions and sufferings, he felt the apparent contradictions to divine goodness, though his faith in that goodness was profound. Hence his human sympathy on the one side and his piety on the other conspired to interest him in character, in the motives and feelings of men, in the influences which they exert over each other, and in the effects upon them of the divine discipline. Here he saw the best hope of resolving the apparent discords.

The chief formal change which he made in Tragedy aided him in working out this tendency of his mind. A third actor made it possible to exhibit the interaction of human motives with greater subtlety and fullness. The dialogue now became still more important than Aeschylus had made it. The Chorus lost nothing of its value in the lyric province; but it ceased to take so active a part in the drama. The trilogy remained the usual, if not the imperative, form of tragic production. But Sophocles usually dispensed with a link of story between the three plays. Here, again, his distinctive aim interprets his practice. In an Aeschylean trilogy, such as the *Oresteia*,

the unity of the trilogy supersedes that of the single play. Sophocles prefers a more limited framework, within which the finer touches of ethical portraiture can be appreciated.

Plutarch briefly notices three stages of development through which the manner of Sophocles had passed, and ascribes the account to the poet himself. What his authority may have been, we do not know. But the three stages are in themselves probable, and part, at least, of the development can be traced in the extant plays. In the first stage, Sophocles is said to have imitated the grandeur of Aeschylus. The phrase used by Plutarch implies that in this grandeur the younger poet came to feel something crude and immature. There is other evidence besides this for the tradition that Sophocles, while regarding Aeschylus as a sublimely inspired poet, was conscious of his own superiority as an artist. The second stage in his style was marked, according to Plutarch, by a certain artificiality;—by elaborate art which had not yet mastered the secret of concealing itself. In his third and final phase, Sophocles had perfected and mellowed the best style for the dramatic expression of character. The final goal here indicated, as that towards which the poet's whole development had moved,

The three
periods of
his style.

is certainly the true one; 'the fine delineation of human character in action was the supreme and distinctive excellence of Sophocles.' It cannot be said that in the extant plays there is any trace of the first, or Aeschylean phase. But when the *Antigone*, produced probably in 441 B.C., is compared with the *Philoctetes*, produced thirty-two years later (in 409 B.C.), we can discern some traces of a progress from the second phase to the third. The portraiture of character in the *Antigone* is, indeed, already consummate. But the style of composition is slightly more artificial than in the *Philoctetes* and the *Antigone*, though probably the earliest of the extant plays was produced when the poet was at least fifty-five, and when he had been at work for twenty-seven years. If we possessed plays written before the *Antigone*, and belonging to the period from 468 to 441 B.C., the steps of the progress could doubtless be more clearly traced.

'In a Sophoclean tragedy there is always some central issue, so contrived as to probe the depths of character in the principal agents. / In the *Antigone*, for example, it is the conflict between the resolve of *Antigone* to obey the unwritten law of the gods by burying her brother, and the resolve of *Creon* to enforce

Character-
istics of a
Sophoclean
play.

his own edict against the burial. And it is the poet's strong grasp of this situation which gives a vital unity to the whole drama. The issue is set forth in a conversation between Antigone and her sister Ismene, with which the play begins. This is the type of opening adopted by Sophocles in all the extant plays; for the *Trachiniae* is not really an exception, although the speech with which Deianeira opens it so far resembles a prologue of Euripides as to be historical. These initial conversations, it should be observed, do not merely explain the situation from which the action starts; they also illustrate the character of some principal person—as that of Antigone. The march of a Sophoclean drama corresponds with the strength and clearness of the central conception; it never halts, though its course is diversified by variety of incident. Thus in the *Antigone* we have the scenes between Creon and the guard set to watch the corpse; between Creon and his son Haemon, who intercedes for Antigone; between Creon and the prophet Teiresias, who foretells the divine wrath. Every occurrence, every speech, contributes to the dramatic progress; at every step the tragic interest rises towards the climax. The Chorus directly assists this progress; not indeed,

The
Sophoclean
Chorus.

as a rule, by sharing in the action, but by attuning the thoughts of the spectators to successive moods in sympathy with the action of the play. Thus in the *Antigone* the subjects of the six choral odes are, the past peril of Thebes from the Argive allies of Polyneices; the audacity of man, as illustrated by the unknown breaker of Creon's edict, who has given burial to Polyneices; the power of love, as shown by Haemon's intercession; the prisons of Danaë, Lycurgus, and Cleopatra, as compared with the rock-tomb which awaits Antigone and the beneficence of Dionysus, whom the Chorus, in a brief gleam of delusive hope, summon to share in the anticipated joy of his favourite Thebes. Each of these six themes has a direct bearing on the dramatic moment.


The poetry of Sophocles is the expression of a mind in which the happiest natural gifts had been ripened during the happiest years of Athenian history. It had been the work of Pericles, between 460 and 430 B.C., to realize the essential idea of a Greek city as it had never been realized before. The Athenian citizen, rich or poor, could now take his part in the public life of the city without undue sacrifice of his private interests, and could also participate in the noblest pleasures of literature and

Sophocles
and the Age
of Pericles.

art. Forms of beauty were around him which, in the words ascribed to Pericles, gave a daily delight that banished gloom. Two men who lived in that age are above all others its witnesses to the modern world. The mind of Thucydides had been moulded by the ideas of Pericles, and doubtless by personal intercourse with him; the Periclean stamp can be recognized in the clearness with which Thucydides apprehends that the vital thing for a state is less the pattern of its constitution than the spirit in which it is governed. Sophocles, again, as a dramatist, shows the Periclean influence in his manner of investing the traditions of Hellenic religion with a higher spiritual and intellectual meaning, and more generally in the harmonious perfection of his poetical art. The artistic side of the Periclean age is indeed represented by the plays of Sophocles in literature, as by the Parthenon in architecture and sculpture. Sophoclean tragedy exhibits the same union of power with purity of taste, the same self-restraint, the same instinct of symmetry, which can still be admired in the remains of the temple. In the poetry, as in the marble, the Athenian spirit shows the fineness to which it could be tempered by the concurrence of those influences and conditions which the age of Pericles had brought together,—

a fortunate union which could not have occurred at any earlier moment, and which, when these few years had passed, was never repeated.

The greatness of Sophocles as a poet depends primarily on his greatness as an artist. Among his gifts, those to which he chiefly owes his fame are, his sympathetic insight, his unfailing sense of proportion and harmony, his chastened beauty of workmanship,—in a word, those faculties by which he renders Tragedy a perfect work of ideal art. Aeschylus takes rank, not primarily in virtue of such gifts as these, but more distinctively by his sublime imaginative vision. The glory which surrounded Sophocles at Athens for more than sixty years attests the high level of mental cultivation and of artistic feeling which then prevailed among Athenians,—not among a select few only, but in those audiences of twenty thousand or more which filled the theatre at the Dionysia. It is not to be expected that modern readers generally should appreciate Sophocles so readily as Aeschylus. With modern readers, Aeschylus has, to begin with, one momentous advantage; there is a strain in his poetry, due to his doctrine concerning the divine vindication of righteousness, which gives him some measure of resemblance to a Hebrew prophet. Sophocles, on the other hand,




subjects the modern mind to the severest test of a capacity for appreciating the purely Hellenic spirit in its highest form. The degree in which a modern enjoys Sophocles is not necessarily a measure of his feeling for poetry; but it may fairly be taken as a measure of his sympathy with the finest qualities of the Athenian genius.

The third master of Attic Tragedy must be reserved for separate treatment.

VII

THE ATTIC DRAMA (*continued*)

THE victory at Salamis, in which Aeschylus took part as a soldier, and which Sophocles, as leader of the boy-chorus, helped ^{Euripides.} to celebrate, marks the birth-year of Euripides. Like Aeschylus, he competed for the tragic prize at the age of twenty-five, but had to wait many years before he gained it. His first success was in 441, when he was thirty-nine; and in a career of nearly half a century that success was only four times repeated. To the end of his days he was the butt of Attic Comedy, which, besides ridiculing his plays, propagated all manner of stories concerning his private life. He was a lonely man, a student and a thinker, who lived in seclusion,—a strong contrast, here, to Aeschylus the soldier and Sophocles the man of affairs. It was an old tradition that he had fitted up a place of study in a cave on the shore of Salamis, where he used to work, looking out upon the sea; and much of his imagery is taken, not indeed from the sea itself, but from the life of seafarers. He was a friend



of Anaxagoras, to whom he has paid a beautiful tribute (fr. 910, *δλβιος κ.τ.λ.*). His management of controversy bears the impress of Protagoras. No tradition associates him with the circle of Pericles; nor does any trace in his work show the influence of Socrates.

The relation of Euripides to the Athens of his time has two distinct aspects, both of which are illustrated by his plays. On the intellectual side, he was in general sympathy with the tendencies which prevailed during the second half of his career. The rhetorical dialectic of the new teachers, with its sophistical subtleties, is conspicuous in his writings. He alludes here and there to particular opinions of various thinkers—Heracleitus, Xenophanes, Anaxagoras—in a manner which indicates his speculative bent; but he is not a declared adherent of any school; nor yet has he a definite philosophy of his own. The central point of his ethical doctrine is the importance of the individual's nature, *φύσις*, his intellectual and moral endowment. He has not broken, meanwhile, with the popular religion; he claims to criticise it freely in the light of morality and reason.

Thus far he was fairly in accord with the tone of his age; but on the social and political side it

His relation
to contempo-
rary Athens.

was otherwise. Nothing in his work shows the intellectual stamp of the Periclean age—as the work of Sophocles, for instance, shows it by the desire to reconcile consecrated tradition with a higher range of thought. Euripides is not, like Sophocles, a true child of that age. His aspirations were rather those, in modern phrase, of philosophical radicalism; he longed for a form of democracy in which the reign of reason should be still less fettered by prescription. The death of Pericles, in 429, removed a great moderating power; but Euripides had the pain of seeing the democracy, when freed from that strong hand, degrade liberty into license, and drown the voice of sober counsel in the strife of demagogues. He shrank from this debased democracy. His best word is for the small farmer, who seldom comes to town, and who does not soil his rustic honesty by contact with the crowd of the market-place. For a while, indeed, Euripides had one bright hope: it was the young and dazzling Alcibiades, for whose victory in the Olympian chariot-race (420 B.C.) he composed the last recorded example of the epinikion. Might not Alcibiades become a second Pericles, only with more advanced aims? That hope was cruelly disappointed. About 409 B.C. Euripides left Athens: and he was not des-

tined to return. He went to King Archelaus in Macedonia. In the rough military world of that half-barbarian court Euripides, now just seventy, would have met a younger Athenian dramatist, Agathon. The wild scenery of the northern land is reflected in the *Bacchae*. He died there in the winter of 407-406 B.C.

The dramatic work of Euripides interests alike by its success and by its failure. It is the most instructive of comments on the nature of Attic Tragedy, and on the limits which that nature imposed. It is also fraught with the germs of a new drama; it is the source of influences which proved fruitful in the later literature of antiquity; it is even a link between the ancient and the modern theatre. But few literary questions are more difficult to estimate fairly than the relation of Euripides to a form of art which he enriched with some of its noblest ornaments, but on which he also impressed tendencies that could lead only to decay and extinction.

Tragedy came to Euripides with its general conditions fixed in a manner which he could not attempt to alter. Three actors, a chorus, subject-matter to be taken from the heroic legends,—these were the essentials. Aeschylus and Sophocles, unlike in so much, were alike in

His work as
a dramatist.

Tragedy had
been ideal.


this, that to the external traditions of their drama they had added an unwritten law as to its spirit, which they both observed with unwavering constancy: it was that the treatment should be ideal. Agamemnon, for example, was not to be taken out of the heroic atmosphere with which the myth surrounded him. He was, indeed, to be made living; but the life was to be that of a Greek hero, —in other words, of a man belonging to the far-off age when gods mingled in the warfare on the plain of Troy; a man, moreover, directly descended from Zeus himself. The divine light which played around that age was compatible with the full humanity of the heroes, as it is in the *Iliad*, only the humanity must be noble. That nobleness is independent of rank or circumstance. The Homeric swineherd Eumaeus has it as well as Achilles. The necessary minimum of such nobleness might be defined negatively. Persons whose life is placed in the heroic age must not so act or speak as to resemble ordinary men or women of the contemporary world. If they do so, they may be interesting, but they lose their ideal character. By ceasing to be ideal they also become, as heroic persons, less real. Agamemnon, arguing like an astute lawyer or an ingenious demagogue, may be a more familiar type of person, but the illusion

that we are listening to the king of Mycenae is ruined.

Now Euripides was a poet fertile in ideas, full of views on all the questions of his day,—
The problem for Euripides. religious, moral, political, social. If he was to write Tragedy, he could only use the heroic myths. Tragedy was an act of worship. He could not be allowed to write a tragedy about Miltiades or Themistocles; but when he had chosen his heroic *dramatis personae*, the impulse was irresistible to make these persons the exponents of his teeming thoughts on contemporary life. 'It was easy enough for Aeschylus,' we can imagine him saying, 'to exclude modern thought; there were no pressing problems then; the era of reason had scarcely dawned; besides his poetical vision, Aeschylus had only his half-mystic theology, which suited it. It is easy, too, for worthy Sophocles, a pious soul who lives for art, not for philosophy; but if I am to give the people of my best,—if I am to teach and improve them through my poetry at the Dionysia,—how can I keep within those old limits of conventional utterance?'

So Euripides went to work in his own new way.
His mode of solving it. The extent to which he modernized the heroes must not be exaggerated. He observed measure. Still, he introduced a most

vital change; he brought the diction and thought of the heroic persons far nearer to that of everyday life; he added small traits of character, which, in contrast to the finer touches of Sophocles, did not (as a rule) deepen the significance of those persons, but merely made them appear more commonplace. And, pervading his plays, there was what must be called the Sophistical strain, most prominent in the Protagorean rhetoric of the debates, where λόγος is pitted against λόγος, but seen also in the remarks on the gods, or on moral questions. Here the light of common day was let in upon the heroic age, with disastrous results for dramatic effect. A new treatment of the Chorus was an inevitable consequence. In this respect the difference between Aeschylus ^{The Chorus.} and Sophocles had been less important than the agreement: both had maintained the organic bond between Chorus and dialogue. This was possible, because the animating spirit of their dialogue was one which could be continued in lyric utterance; it was noble; it belonged to the age of the heroes. But after a dialogue in which two disputants had displayed the latest novelties of rhetorical casuistry, how could a choral ode be in accord with it? And besides this difficulty, there was a positive motive for a change—the wish for variety. Thus the



choral odes of Euripides came to be either wholly irrelevant to the dramatic context, or connected with it only slightly and occasionally.

The instinct which told Euripides that the day of Attic Tragedy, as the elder masters had understood it, could not be much prolonged, was a true one ; the signs were around him. But it is a different question, and one not easily answered, how far he actually felt, in his last twenty or thirty years, the pressure of a public demand, which his innovations were designed to meet. It is a significant fact that, in 409 B.C., when the career of Euripides was nearing its close, the Philoctetes of Sophocles gained the first prize. The old style of Tragedy could still hold its own, then, with the public—at least in the hands of Sophocles. But

Concessions
to popular
taste.

the veteran poet may have been a favoured exception. Certainly there are several features in the work of Euripides which look like concessions to a new popular taste. Foremost among these is his adoption in his lyrics of the musical novelties associated with the new dithyrambic school, and especially with Timotheus.

The new
Music.

The general tendency of these was to substitute a florid style, with profuse ornament, for the simpler and purer music of the older Tragedy. A step in the same direction was

the monody,—a solo sung by an actor, who accompanied it with an expressive dance. Such monodies—called ‘Cretan’ by Aristophanes, since the dance was of Cretan origin—were elements of operatic ballet thrust into Greek Tragedy. Outside of the lyric province, an appeal to popular taste may be surmised in the love of Euripides for startling effects in the management of the plot. The use of the *deus ex machina* Mechanical effects. was often, doubtless, merely to cut a knot ; but we may conjecture that it was also popular in itself, as a ghost is always popular on the modern stage. The Euripidean prologue, introducing the spectators to the subject of the play, was again a boon to ignorance or mental indolence.

In such particulars, the course adopted by Euripides may have been prescribed, or favoured, by his audiences. But the General scope of his changes. essence of his reform, at any rate, had little to do with popular taste. He was not driven to it ; he imposed it. The wit of Aristophanes often packs a great deal of sound criticism into a few words. His Euripides says that, when he received Tragedy from Aeschylus, it was plethoric, swollen, and heavy. He treated it for this malady, giving it decoctions which reduced it to a leaner but more healthy state. Then he proceeded to

feed it up again, with such a stimulating diet as monodies. There is a biting truth in this mockery. Euripides had to apply the principle of compensation. The heroic had to be replaced by the sensational.

In attempting to estimate the work of Euripides, we must indeed guard against allowing too much weight to the verdict of Attic Comedy; but neither can we ignore it. It is necessary to apprehend the point of view from which this contemporary satire assailed him, and the grounds on which it based its unfavourable judgment. If we then proceed to modify that judgment in the light of a larger survey, we shall do so with less fear of erring through modern misconception.

Antagonism
of the Comic
Poets.

The hostility of Aristophanes to Euripides was certainly bitter; nor can it surprise us, if he believed Euripides to have done all the mischief with which he charges him. But Aristophanes was not the only comic poet who attacked Euripides. There was a deeper reason for this than any individual or personal sentiment. Attic Comedy had a natural quarrel with the innovator in Tragedy, and the ground of this lay in its own history.

Ultimate
cause of this.

Sicily is one of two regions in which the origin

of Comedy is to be sought; the other is Athens. The Dorians, both in Sicily and in Greece Proper, early showed a bent towards farcical humour; in the case of the Siceliot, there may have been some Italic influences at work, since it has always been an Italic gift to seize those traits of life and character which suit farce and burlesque. At the courts of the Sicilian princes such entertainments were welcome. The Dorian Epicharmus, from the Sicilian Megara, was the first who developed the ruder farce into a species of dramatic poetry. This was done at Syracuse, where the tragic poets Phrynichus and Aeschylus had been the guests of Hieron; and Attic Tragedy may have suggested the general idea of the form which Epicharmus adopted, though he does not seem to have used a Chorus. Athens, during the same period—the first half of the fifth century B.C.—developed a comic drama from a different source. At the Dionysia, when the people were assembled to worship the god and to see tragedy, the merry procession called a *komos* had become a recognised feature of the festival. It was at first a voluntary and unofficial affair. One or more troops of men dressed themselves up in mummers' costume, and marched into the sacred precinct to the music of the flute. They then sang



a song in honour of Dionysus; and one of their number addressed the audience in a humorous speech, turning on civic interests and on the topics of the day. The festal procession then withdrew again. The name Comedy, *κωμῳδία*, originally denoted this 'Song of the Comus,' and was doubtless coined at Athens, on the analogy of *tragoedia*. About 465 B.C. the *comus* was adopted into the official programme of the festival: instead of being the voluntary work of private persons, it was now organised with aid from the State. The steps by which a dramatic performance was built up around the comus-song and speech can no longer be traced. But some five-and-thirty years later, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war, Attic Comedy, as we know it, was mature. Tragedy naturally furnished the general model on which the new kind of drama was constructed. This is apparent in the limit placed on the number of actors; no extant play of Aristophanes requires more than three regular actors, allowance being made for small parts being taken by supernumeraries who were not required to be absolutely mute. But Comedy was connected with Tragedy by much more than this kinship of form. Comedy expressed the frolicsome side of that Dionysiac worship from which Tragedy took its birth. Religion, the religion of Dionysus,

was the breath of life to Comedy, not less—perhaps even more—than to her grave sister. It was religion that authorised the riot of fancy which turns the world topsy-turvy, the jest upon all things Olympian or human, the unsparing personal satire. Let that popular religion once lose its hold, and then, though Tragedy might survive, Comedy, such as Aristophanes wrote, must lose its sacred privileges, and, with them, its reason for existing. By the first law of its being, the Old Comedy was the sworn foe of all things which could undermine the sway of Dionysus, the god who not only inspires the poet, but protects his liberties. And the nearer Tragedy stood to the original form which the Dionysiac cult had given to it, the closer was the kinship which Comedy felt with it. For this reason Aeschylus represents, even better than Sophocles, the form of Tragedy with which the muse of Aristophanes was in spiritual accord; and Euripides represents everything which that muse abhors. Euripides, who dwarfs the heroic stature, and profanes heroic lips with the rhetoric of the ecclesia or the law-court; Euripides, with his rationalism, his sophistry, his proclivity to new-fangled notions of every kind—here Comedy, with sure instinct, saw a dramatist who was using the Dionysia against the very faith

to which that festival was devoted, and whose poetry was the subtle solvent by which Comedy and Tragedy alike were destined to perish.

It was a happy fortune that, before its short life came to an end, the essence of Attic Comedy was so perfectly expressed by the great satirist who was also a great poet. The genius of Aristophanes indeed transcends the form in which he worked; but it exhibits all the varied capabilities of that form. He can denounce a corrupt demagogue on an unworthy policy with a stinging scorn and a force of righteous indignation which make the poet almost forgotten in the patriot. He can use mockery with the lightest touch. But it is not in denunciation or in banter that his most exquisite faculty is revealed. It is rather in those lyric passages where he soars above everything that can move laughter or tears, and pours forth a strain of such free, sweet music and such ethereal fancy as it would be hard to match save in Shakespeare. A poet who united such gifts brought keen insight and fine taste to the task of the critic.

In reading the *Frogs*, we do not forget that it is a comedy, not a critical essay. And we allow for the bias against Euripides. But no careful student of the play can fail to ad-

Aristo-
phanes.

The criticism
in the *Frogs*.

mire how Aristophanes seizes the essential points in the controversy between the two schools of Tragedy. When Aeschylus has said that a poet ought to edify, Euripides rejoins (in effect), 'Are *you* edifying when you indulge in dark grandiloquence, instead of explaining yourself in the language of ordinary humanity?' Now observe the rejoinder of Aeschylus. He replies, 'Great sentiments and great thoughts are suitably clothed in stately words. Besides, it is natural that the demigods (τοὺς ἡμιθέους) should have grandeur of words; for their clothes are much grander than ours. I exhibited all this properly—and you have utterly spoiled it.' Here Aristophanes has put the true issue in a simple form. Aeschylus is right in vindicating his own style, and condemning his rival's, by an appeal to the nature of his subject-matter. Heroes and demigods ought not to speak like ordinary men. He is right, too, when he enforces his point by referring to the stately costume which he had devised for Tragedy. This was a visible symbol of the limit set to realism.

When Aristophanes passes from the ground of art to that of ethics, the justice of his criticism may be less evident to moderns, but here also he is substantially right from the Athenian point of

view. His Aeschylus complains that Euripides had sapped the springs of civic manliness, of patriotism, and even of morality. It is true that Euripides, as a dramatic poet, had contributed to tendencies setting in that direction. Homer had been regarded by the Greeks as their greatest teacher, because the heroes were the noblest ideals of human life which they possessed. Aeschylus and Sophocles, in their different ways, had preserved the Homeric spirit. If the heroes once ceased to be ideals of human life, the ordinary Greek of the fifth century had no others. To depose the heroes from their elevation above commonplace humanity was also to destroy an indispensable link between god and man in the popular religion. But that religion was at the root of the Greek citizen's loyalty to the city.

In the smaller details of his polemic against Euripides, the comic poet is sometimes
Summary. acute and just, sometimes excessively unfair. We are not here concerned with such details. The broad facts which claim our attention are simply these. Attic Comedy, as such, was the natural foe of a tragic poet like Euripides. Aristophanes clearly understood the artistic limits proper to Attic Tragedy. He clearly saw where and how Euripides had transgressed them ; he

also saw that this error of Euripides in art was, for the Athens of his day, inseparable from a bad moral influence. And Aristophanes can sum up his judgment by saying that Euripides, in pursuing new refinements, had abandoned the greatest things (*τὰ μέγιστα*) of the Tragic Art—as Athens had known it.

The very qualities by which Euripides incurred this censure endeared him to later antiquity, both Greek and Roman. As Popularity of Euripides in later times : Attic Tragedy perished with Euripides, so the old life of Athens, and of Hellas itself, perished only seventy years later. Hellas Hellenistic : gave place to Hellenism, a civilization in which Hellenic and foreign elements were mingled. This later Greek age recognized Euripides as its prophet. He had been before his own time, and therefore he was in harmony with theirs. In touching the deep problems of human destiny, he had given utterance to their scepticism, perplexity, melancholy. In drawing human character, he had used a thousand subtle touches which every day they could recognize as true, and which they found in no other poet of old Hellas. He delighted them by the bold ingenuity of his plots and by the brilliant beauty of his descriptions. He was with them, too, in their sorrows ;

are powerful scenes, which can often be detached. There are ideas, maxims, sentiments, of which it is easy to make an anthology. In an age of intellectual and moral unsettlement, a cultivated man who gives a voice to each doubt or emotion as it arises is certain to have the ear of posterity. It is not only in action that history repeats itself. At one point or another, in this phase or that of his reflections, Euripides has a kinship with the troubled spirits of every race and century. Not less universal in its appeal to the modern mind is that gleam of romance which he makes to play, with so strange a beauty, around the shapes of classical mythology. We see it in the story of Phaedra, pining with secret love; in the story of Ion, the young ministrant of the Delphian temple, who comes to learn the secret of his parentage; in both the plays concerning the fortunes of Iphigeneia. This tinge of romance is given chiefly by two things,—analysis of the individual's feeling, aided by minute portraiture of circumstance, and sudden surprises in the plot,—sometimes through supernatural agency. But a romantic colouring is not the only quality of Euripides in which he might be regarded as a precursor of modern drama. In one play at least, the *Bacchae*, he shows a sense of natural beauty, lit up by fancy, which no other

Greek poet, perhaps, has manifested with equal splendour. The same play is also distinguished from all the other works of its author by profound sympathy with the spirit of the Dionysiac worship. It was written in Macedonia shortly before his death; and might almost have propitiated Aristophanes himself, who very likely had not seen it when he wrote the *Frogs*.

Euripides was sometimes reproached with the tearful scenes in his plays. His critics called him maudlin and effeminate. He has made a good answer, and it is curiously modern. The disguised Orestes is deeply moved by the plight in which he finds his sister Electra. As he is supposed to be a stranger, he feels it necessary to make some excuse for his emotion, lest it should surprise her. 'Pity,' he says, 'nowhere dwells with ignorance, but with the wise among men; for indeed the wise have to pay a price for their advantage in wisdom.' 'Wise,' 'wisdom,' here refer to mental cultivation. He means that sensibility to the sight of suffering is the proof, and the penalty, of mental refinement.

There is yet another trait in the poetry of Euripides which often gives it a peculiar charm for moderns. Though he was called a misogynist, no one has shown a finer appreciation of feminine

tenderness or feminine strength. Nor has any ancient poet given more beautiful expression to the family affections. Take, for instance, this fragment of the Erechtheus : ' Love your mother, children, for there is no love that it is sweeter to cherish.' In another fragment (No. 909) a devoted wife is very beautifully described. She holds her husband's affection by her goodness more surely than by beauty ; she looks always on the bright side of his deeds and words ; his troubles and joys are reflected in her countenance ; she helps to bear his burdens, and without feeling it to be a pain. It is significant that these verses have been preserved by a Christian writer, Clement of Alexandria.

Such are the qualities by which Euripides became the first prophet of a cosmopolitan humanity. His influence on the history of the world has been wider than that of either Aeschylus or Sophocles, for the interests and feelings to which he appeals are common to all men. He demands no peculiar sympathy with the Hellenic spirit ; he makes no severe demand on the historical imagination. No sane criticism would now dispute his claim to a place among the world's great poets.

Yet the serious student of Greek literature must not shrink from a difficult and almost painful

duty; he must not shut his eyes to the truth that Aristophanes was right in the main, both artistically and morally. This great and fascinating poet, Euripides, the author of a dazzling compromise, the precursor of the romantic drama, was not a sound Hellenic artist; he was a herald of death to the art around which he threw those novel splendours. In modern phrase, we may say that Tragedy as he found it was ideal, and that his tendency was towards realism; only, in using those words, we must remember that the Greek mind, when it was at its best,—as it was in the middle of the fifth century B.C.,—knew no such antithesis between idealism and realism in art as our use of those terms is apt to suggest. Achilles, for instance, was what we should call an ideal to the Greeks; he was so, however, not as transcending humanity, not as a semi-abstract person seen through a divine mist, but because he was so lucidly and brilliantly human,—human in the most splendid and pathetic shape that Greek fancy could give to a young hero. Odysseus was an ideal as being a man, vividly drawn, of superlative fortitude, ability, and resource. When Euripides made such persons speak in the strain of contemporary rhetoric or casuistry, he was not making them, from a Greek point of

Euripides
as tried by
the Hellenic
standard.

His 'real-
ism': what
it meant.



view, more real; he was making them, considered as heroes, less so, because he was reducing them from a higher to a lower sphere of reality. Menander did not feel this, any more than the ordinary modern reader does, because in Menander's day the old Hellenic life was broken up, and the old faith was dead; but Aristophanes felt it, and Sophocles would have felt it too. Sophocles, in his later years, experienced the influence of Euripides on the technical side,—in some details of composition and versification,—though not to the extent that has sometimes been assumed; but no one can say that in the essence of his conception—in 'the greatest things' of the tragic art, as Aristophanes calls them—Sophocles ever made the smallest approach to the younger poet's manner. The lines of an English poetess are well known:—

'Our Euripides the human
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touching of things common
Till they rise to meet the spheres.'

The last two lines may often be as true for *us* as the first two; but they do not truly describe what Euripides did for those of his Athenian contemporaries who were in sympathy with the traditional Hellenic faith. In their view, he so touched things heroic as to make them,—not rise to meet the spheres,—but descend nearer to the

level of common ground. Cicero, in an eloquent passage¹, has pleaded for aesthetic tolerance on the ground of the wide differences of individual type between artists who excel in the same field. Sculpture is a single art, he says; and yet how unlike each other are Myron, Polycleitus, and Lysippus! Painting is a single art; and yet there is little resemblance between Zeuxis, Aglaophon, and Apelles. It is so also, he proceeds, in poetry. Roman literature presents us with the contrasts of Ennius, Pacuvius, and Attius; Greek literature, with those of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. This is an excellent instance of a plausible criticism which moderns would be apt to accept as almost a truism, and which, nevertheless, so far as Greek art and poetry are concerned, misses the vital point. The difference between Myron and Polycleitus in Greek sculpture is utterly different, not merely in degree but in kind, from that which both present in relation to Lysippus. Aeschylus and Sophocles are dissimilar; but the difference is not the same in kind as that which divides both of them from Euripides.

In the highest Greek genius, symmetry and harmony were essential elements; the Hellene had established a concord of The great age of Greek poetry;

¹ *De Oratore*, 3. 7. § 26.

spirit and body which he impressed upon the creations of his mind, and in which resides the peculiar secret of their beauty ; therefore the truly classical poetry of Greece, such as that of Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, cannot be understood,—indeed, is not conceivable,—apart from the phase of Hellenic society and Hellenic thought in which each kind had its birth ; to each of them this society and this thought were necessary conditions.

At the end of the fifth century before Christ
and the decline. the intellectual progress of Hellas had produced a discord between the inward and the outward life which nothing could have resolved, short of some new religion which should succeed to the place of the old. And, as this discord became ever more conscious and more complex, the framework of the outward life itself was dissolved ; there came a divorce between society and the State ; the citizen no longer lived for the city. It is no accident that the creative period of the Greek mind closed with the end of the old social and political order in Hellas. Studios leisure might remain ; learning might increase ; new regions of knowledge might be opened ; but the highest inspiration of literature and of art had disappeared.

It may be urged on behalf of Euripides that without some such changes as he introduced Tragedy could no longer hope to please. The altered circumstances of the time demanded the concession. This may be granted, at least for the time immediately after his: but it is only another way of saying that Attic Tragedy had reached the term of its existence, as Ionian epos had done at an earlier time. A great poet in whom the artistic sense was more purely Hellenic than it was in Euripides would have refrained from attempting a compromise. He would have felt that the result, however effective, could not be harmonious; that not merely would the form of Attic Tragedy be modified, but its very soul would be extinguished.

The course
taken by
Euripides.

The historical proof of this is given by the actual development of Greek drama after Euripides. Tragedy languished in a feeble imitative way, and soon ceased altogether. It was in the line of Comedy that the work begun by the last of the tragic masters was continued and completed. The portraiture of ordinary character, the realistic description of ordinary life, to which Euripides had made the first approach, reached its full development in the New Comedy.

Its literary
sequel.

Menander was as far from the lofty lyric

Menander.

strain of Aristophanes as from his wild fantasy and his personal satire. Menander's prevailing tone was that of polite conversation; not without passages of tender sentiment, grave thought, or almost tragic pathos. Thus his style was nearly on the level to which Euripides had reduced that of Tragedy: the resemblance was often so great that their fragments have sometimes been confused.

How Euripides was shackled. Euripides would have found a freer scope for his peculiar gifts, and would have worked with more complete success, if he could have broken away from the trammels of tradition; if he could have multiplied the actors at will, chosen his subject-matter where he would, altered the style of the costumes, and abolished the Chorus. Beautiful as his lyrics often are, they would charm still more as independent odes. But he could not thus emancipate himself, because Tragedy was a part of the Dionysiac worship, and the tradition which prescribed its type was also the sanction of its existence. It was needful that Tragedy should die before it could live again, the old name with a new form and a new spirit.

Roman modification of the Greek model. In the Roman adaptation of the Greek New Comedy a novel feature was introduced, fraught with consequences more important than itself. The division into scenes

and acts, following on the abolition of the Chorus' was not, in Roman practice, accompanied with free change of scene, or with liberty for the dramatist to suppose as long an interval of time between scenes as he might desire. But it prepared the way for such deliverance from the thralldom of the 'unities,' a freedom which confers such an advantage on the modern theatre.

After the Roman reproductions of Greek Comedy, a long period, fruitful in new influences, elapsed before the advent of Romantic Drama, of which Shakespeare is the greatest representative. In the dark ages, the classical plays still found readers among the learned,—chiefly in monasteries; but there was no theatre as a place of amusement. The popular entertainers were not actors but story-tellers—minstrels, troubadours, and the like. The very words 'Tragedy' and 'Comedy' ceased to have dramatic associations. Such stories as those in the *Mirror of Magistrates* were called tragedies; Dante could call his grave epic the *Divine Comedy*. Stories in prose and verse,—sacred, taken from Scripture, or concerning the Saints—secular, concerning deeds of chivalry or marvellous adventure—were the delight of the middle age. The entire range of such stories falls under the word 'Ro-

Transition
from Ancient
to Modern
Drama.

mance,' which merely expresses the group of languages, all sprung from that of Rome, in which such stories were current. The first meeting of Romance with its almost forgotten predecessor, Drama, was in the Mysteries and Miracle Plays, from the twelfth century onwards,—which had for their first object to place sacred stories before the eyes of a laity unable to read Latin. The Miracle Play dealt with some portion of Scripture history, or with the life of a Saint: The Mystery, with some part of New Testament History which concerned a mysterious subject, such as the Incarnation or the Atonement. The 'Morality' was another step towards drama;—a play in which the characters were personified virtues and vices, or such allegorical agents as Wealth or Death. Yet one step more was taken when the abstract virtues and vices were replaced by men typical of them; as Aristeides might represent justice. And then the circle of characters came to be enlarged so as to include human life generally, as in John Heywood's Interludes in Henry VIII.'s reign.

The regular drama was now at hand. The first English Comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, was written by Nicholas Udall, before 1551. The first English Tragedy, *Gorboduc*, by Sackville and Norton, was acted in 1562, two years before

Shakespeare's birth. This new drama is called the Romantic, in contradistinction to the Classical, because Romance furnished it with most of its material. But the ancient drama, revealed anew by the Renaissance, gave the outlines of its form, and strongly influenced its construction. There was indeed a school of criticism, not extinct, though defeated, in Shakespeare's time, which contended for the strict observance of the ancient unities in respect to time and place. Ben Jonson combated it by arguing that the ancient drama itself had been gradually developed, and that moderns were entitled to carry the development further, 'instead,' as he says, 'of being tied to those strict and regular forms which the niceness of a few, who are nothing but form, would thrust upon us.'

In recalling, however briefly, this course of progress from ancient to modern drama, we are already warned against making an exaggerated claim for that unique and splendid phase of dramatic poetry—the earliest—which is known as Attic Tragedy. It is not the absolute measure, for all times and peoples, of what Tragedy should or can be. It does not furnish a norm by which Shakespeare or Goethe or Victor Hugo can be adequately tried.


Attic Tragedy—its claim defined.

But in its own kind Attic Tragedy is supreme. It is the final outcome of the Greek genius in poetry; it has absorbed into itself elements of all that was best in the forms which went before it. It is also a perfect expression of the Athenian mind in the best age of Athens; that is, of the greatest national genius for literary art which history can show, seen at the moment of its highest excellence.

The whole history of classical Greek poetry was that of a natural growth. Epos expresses one stage of the Hellenic development, Lyric poetry a second, Attic Drama a third. Each, in its own time and in its own way, represents an order of beliefs and feelings to which the poet gave, indeed, a clearer and more beautiful embodiment, but which was already pervading the Hellenic world of his age. Each, too, is addressed to hearers more directly than to readers; its interpreter is the living voice of the reciter, of the lyric singer, or of the actor. In the literature of Rome, and of the modern world, it is only the ruder phases of poetry, those of folk-song or ballad, which exhibit such a relation to national life. But Greek poetry preserved this relation so long as creative force remained to it. The classification, Epic, Lyric, Dramatic, is itself a proof.

Natural
growth of
Greek
poetry.

The general rules governing each of these forms were gradually shaped by poets in response to the needs of Hellenic audiences. The laws of Epos were evolved by the conditions of a minstrel's recitation at a banquet, or on some public occasion. The laws of the Lyric were shaped by the requirements of choral worship at Dorian festivals, or by the usages of Aeolian society. The principal laws of Drama were determined by the Attic ritual of Dionysus. And when these general laws had been thus shaped, they were binding on the poet; his original genius was to be shown in his handling of the instrument prescribed to him, not in devising new instruments of his own; he could introduce new details, but the great outlines were fixed. His subject-matter decided the form which he was to employ. The series of great poets in any modern literature would illustrate this by contrast. Take, for example, English poetry from Spenser to Wordsworth; the literary development can be traced, no doubt, to the causes which connect it with the general intellectual progress of the nation, and with the social or political influences of different periods; but it is not, in the direct Greek sense, a spontaneous and continuous expression of national life; and therefore it does not follow, in the Greek sense, the course of a natural growth.



Hence there is no poetry of which it is so true as of the Greek that it ought to be studied in the historical order of its development. Homer is the best preparation for Pindar; Homer is again the best aid, and Pindar no small aid, to the comprehension of the Attic drama. In the classical age the whole bent of the Greek mind was retrospective. Descending the stream of Greek poetry from its source, we gradually learn to appreciate the feeling with which successive Greek poets looked back upon the spiritual past of their race. It would be a further aid to such appreciation, if it were possible to restrict our field of view as it was restricted for the Greeks themselves. But no modern can strictly confine his thoughts within the mental boundaries of ancient Greece; despite all his efforts, disturbing cross-lights from later ages will steal in, and colour or obscure his vision of that far-off world. The Attic drama, with its definite framework, its clear outlines, and its strong concentration, is the form of Greek poetry least liable to these effects; it is that which we can hope to see most nearly from the Hellenic point of view. In Tragedy, this is made possible for us by Aeschylus and Sophocles; in Comedy, by Aristophanes. The spectacle offered by Euripides is, in itself, less purely Hellenic; but, if we

The order of
that growth
should be
followed in
study.

only remember that, then we can enjoy without reserve the peculiar gift which his genius has bequeathed to the modern world,—a blending of Hellenic light, though that light is declining, with the incipient promise of Romance.

VIII

THE PERMANENT POWER OF GREEK POETRY

IN a survey of Greek poetry, epic, lyric, and dramatic, we have seen how, in each successive phase, it was the voice of Greek life. The very word 'literature' is fraught with associations which tend to obscure this fact. Writing was, indeed, the instrument by which the poems were preserved and transmitted. In the second half of the fifth century B.C. copies of the most popular works were diligently multiplied and widely circulated. But it belonged to the very essence of all the great poetry that it appealed to hearers rather than to readers. The Greeks of the classical age were eager listeners and talkers: they delighted in lively conversation and subtle discussion, but they were not great students of books. It was the interchange of living speech that sharpened their quick apprehension and gave elasticity to their intelligence. There is a striking passage in the Phaedrus

Relation of
Greek poetry
to Greek life.

of Plato which expresses the genuine Greek feeling on this subject. The written record of thought, Socrates says, is, taken by itself, an inanimate thing. There are two brothers, the spoken *logos* and the written *logos*; but the first alone is true-born; the second is illegitimate; it does not inherit the full capacities of reason; if it is questioned, it remains dumb; if it is attacked, it can offer no defence. The spoken *logos*, indeed, alone is really existent; the written is a mere phantom of it. In the place where this remark occurs, it points to the difference between a barren Rhetoric and a fruitful Dialectic. But the remark itself is of still wider application. In every province of intellectual activity, and in that of poetry among the rest, the Greeks of the classical age demanded a living sympathy of mind with mind. What they felt in regard to the poet can be best understood by comparing it with the feeling which not they alone, but all people, have in regard to the orator and the preacher. The true orator, the great preacher, speaks out of the fulness of genuine conviction and emotion to the minds and hearts of those who hear him; through all variations of mood and tone, he keeps in mental touch with them. The excellence of the classical Greek poet was tried by the same test. No refinement or

elaboration of art could sustain the poet through his ordeal, if he failed in truth to nature. False sentiment may pass muster in the study, but it is inevitably betrayed by its own unveracity when it is spoken aloud before listeners whose minds are sane, as those of the Greeks pre-eminently were; the hollow ring is detected; it offends; and the exemption of the best Greek poetry from false sentiment is a merit secured by the very conditions under which that poetry was produced.

The form of expression, again, was controlled by this tribunal of sound-minded hearers. A style might be novel and bold in any degree that the poet's faculty could reach; but at least it was required to have in it the pulse of life; it would be repugnant to his audience if they perceived the artificial outcome of mechanical formulas, a style which sought to impress or surprise by mere tricks of phrase, having no vital relation to his thought. When Aristophanes quotes such tricks of phrase, even from a poet so great in many ways as Euripides, we seem to catch an echo of Athenian laughter; we feel how strong and how sober was the control which the Athenian theatre exercised in this direction. When the work of the composer failed to be vital and sincere, this, the unpardonable fault, was described by the expres-

sive word *ψυχρός*, *frigid*. The composition was then no longer a living thing, which spoke to the hearers, and elicited a response. It was stricken with the chill of death.

Thus the Greek poetry of the great age was not merely inspired by life; it was regulated by life; the instinct of the hearers was a restraint operating upon the poet, a safeguard against affectation or unreality. The freshness, the charm of nature, the immortal youth, which belong to such Greek poetry are due not simply to the qualities of the Greek mind, but also to this relation between the poet and his audience. This fact cannot be too much emphasized, for it at once constitutes an essential difference between the best Greek poetry and such as has been produced under the conditions of a literary age, one of books and readers. In a literary age the influence of criticism upon poetry operates through the individual critic, who either speaks for himself alone, or is the exponent of a school or a coterie. Such criticism, working on the sensitive temperament of a poet, is too apt to check his spontaneity; on the other hand, it does not necessarily help to keep him in accord with nature, that is, with the first law of poetical truth and beauty. But the Greek poet's spontaneity was in no way checked by his audience;

they only required that he should maintain a living relation with them. It is a familiar experience that the collective impression of intelligent listeners, to a speech, let us say, or to a sermon, has a critical value of a certain kind which can seldom be claimed for the judgment of any single critic. There is a certain magnetic sympathy, generated by the mere presence of fellow-listeners, which more or less influences each member of such a company. He can scarcely avoid considering how that to which he is listening is likely to affect other minds beside his own. The very atmosphere of human companionship tends to preserve the sanity of the individual judgment. In the case of people with the unique gifts of the Greek race,—their obedience to reason, and their instinct for beauty,—the critical value of the collective impression was exceptionally high. Their poets were subject to a test which, while leaving them the largest freedom, also warned them, with unfailing accuracy, when they were in danger of going wrong.

Old Greek
view of the
poet as a
teacher—
what it im-
plies.

Further, it should be remembered that poetry, orally delivered, not written for readers, had been from the earliest times the very basis of Greek education. The Greek genius had reached full maturity before

written literature became important, and before literary prose had been developed. There is no more significant testimony of this fact than is afforded by the manner in which Greeks of the classical age conceived the office of the poet. They regarded him as primarily a teacher. Aristophanes frequently expresses this view of his own calling, and is a true interpreter of orthodox Greek sentiment when he enumerates the lessons which may be learned in various departments from the older poets. Aristotle was the first who formally asserted that the aim of poetry, as of all fine art, is to give noble pleasure, and that its didactic use is accidental. But the older conception held its ground, and often reappears in the later Greek literature. Strabo, in the Augustan age, can still describe poetry as an elementary philosophy, which instructs us—pleasurably, no doubt—in regard to character, emotion, action. With the same meaning, he observes that no one can be a good poet who is not first a good man. Plutarch gives still more forcible expression to the same sentiment: poetry, he says, is a kind of twilight,—a soft light in which truth is tempered with fiction,—to which the young are introduced in order that their eyes may be gradually prepared for the full sunshine of philosophy. In the Roman writers, too, this old

Greek view can be traced, though sometimes blended with the Aristotelian, as when Horace insists equally on the *utile* and the *dulce*; and from the Roman world it passed on to the Renaissance. The prevalent view of the Elizabethan age, as given by Sir Philip Sidney in his 'Apology for Poetry,' was that the end of poetry is 'delightful teaching.' Dryden was something of a heretic when he ventured to say, 'I am satisfied if' verse 'cause delight; for delight is the chief, if not the only, end of poesy.' It may seem strange that the view of poetry as primarily didactic, a view which might be deemed prosaic, should have been that which was generally held by the Greeks, the most artistic of all races, in the age when their artistic faculties were at the best. But it is needful to distinguish between this view as it was held in Hellenistic or Roman times, and as it was held by the Greeks of an earlier period. What it really signifies, in its old Greek form, is that poetry was interwoven with the whole texture of Greek life. The voice of the poet was the voice from which the people had been accustomed, through long generations, to derive every thought that raised their minds above daily routine, and every sentiment that came home to their hearts with living power. When they spoke of the poet as a teacher,

and of poetry as didactic, this did not imply any indifference to beauty and form, or to the delight which such form gives; it was simply a recognition of poetry as the highest influence, intellectual and spiritual, which they knew. It was not merely a recreation of their leisure, but a power pervading and moulding their whole existence. The ethical aspect, to which they habitually gave prominence, was in their conception inseparable from the artistic, and became thus prominent because, to them, poetry was a thing so potent and so serious. This was the sense in which the Greeks of the classical age spoke of poetry as didactic; it was, in reality, quite different from the sense in which the same view of it was enunciated by the literary moralists of a later time, who regarded Greek poetry as a treasure-house of maxims or sentiments wherewith to point their rules of conduct and to fill their anthologies. Between the two stands Aristotle's doctrine that the end of poetry is to give noble pleasure,—a doctrine, which, as we can now see, was itself a testimony to the fact of which in his *Poetics* and his *Rhetoric* he implies his consciousness, that the creative age of the Greek genius was finished.

A broad line separates that age, in respect of its poetical work, from every other. In no second

instance has the world seen the most perfect art of expression joined to such direct sympathy with the living soul of the people whose mind was thus interpreted. The great types of Greek poetry, epic, lyric, dramatic, became permanent traditions; they passed on from one nation to another, receiving various modifications, while always preserving the traces, direct or indirect, of their origin; the Greek spirit, too, reappears now and again, though fitfully and partially, in later times; but the combination of form with spirit which distinguishes the classical poetry of Greece remains unique.

Greek poetry
of the best
age—its dis-
tinction.

Of all the stages through which the Greek tradition passed, none is more instructive than the Alexandrian. It is so near to the great Hellenic age in time, it has so many links with it, and yet the difference is so profound. The best poetry of Greece had been nourished by two inspirations, working together for beauty, for natural freshness and vigour, for sincerity; these inspirations were religion and political freedom. The Alexandria of the third century B.C. had no longer the inspiration of the Hellenic religion. In the religion of Alexandria, the oriental element, mingled with Hellenic forms and names, was already predominant, often in shapes which were

The Alexan-
drian period.

not only non-Hellenic, but non-Aryan, being distinctly Semitic both in form and in origin. This tendency had begun, indeed, earlier; but it implied a fundamental change of thought and of feeling when cults such as that of Adonis came to be publicly and generally practised by Greeks. Then as to civic life, it was not merely in form of government that the capital of the Ptolemies differed from the free cities of the elder Hellas. We remember Aristotle's views as to the proper limit of size for a city. 'A city could not consist,' he says, 'of ten men, nor, again, of one hundred thousand' (*Eth. N.* 9. 10). A city of one hundred thousand (free) inhabitants would have been, in Aristotle's estimate, no longer a civic society, a πόλις, but something more unwieldy. It has been computed that at the end of the Peloponnesian war the total free population of Athens was less than seventy thousand. Aristophanes can assume that his Athenian audience will seize each of his innumerable allusions to fellow-citizens, whom we may suppose to have been, in many cases, of no public eminence, and who nevertheless were familiar to the mass of their fellow citizens by their personal peculiarities, failings, or merits. This compactness of social life was an intellectual gain to poetry. But Alexandria in the third century B.C. was like a

huge modern city. It had a population of about eight hundred thousand. Every country of the ancient world contributed its quota to that multitude. There was a native Egyptian quarter, prolific in beggars by day and burglars by night. There was a large Jewish quarter, harbouring chiefly men of business or men of letters. Soldiers from Greece, Italy, Sicily, and Asia were enrolled among the guards of the Ptolemies. Merchants from the furthest East brought the porcelain of China and the choicest products of India to the marts of the great capital. Literature, like art, was no longer a public delight, prepared by citizens for citizens; it was now mainly the pleasure of princes and millionaires, and was produced by men who might be described as professional men of letters. The Alexandrian age is the earliest that can be called, in a modern sense, literary; the earliest in which a literary class catered for select, though numerous, readers. The learned poets of Alexandria wielded the classical Greek language with complete mastery of its vocabulary. Their models, the classical Greek writers, were thoroughly familiar to them; they had explored all the paths of Greek mythology, even the most devious and obscure. Yet, in reading Callimachus or Apollonius Rhodius, we speedily become aware that the

difference between them and the older poets is not merely one of degree, but, in respect to what makes poetry vital, a difference of kind. They are ingenious, elegant, copious; their gift of expression is often brilliant; but the thing which is not there is the breath of life. Their work is the work of *study*, artificial, elaborate, charged with allusions gathered by their wide reading, embellished with words and phrases culled from all the highways and by-ways of poetical diction; but if, in the great age of Greece, such poems had been tried by the sound natural instinct of a Greek audience, they would not have been saved by their occasional beauties; taken in the mass, they would have been condemned as *ψυχρά*, frigid.

The Alexandrian age can show only one poet who has a true affinity with the great
Theocritus.
 past of Greek song, and that is Theocritus.

His rural idyls are no sham pastorals, but true to the sights and sounds of his native Sicily. The Sicilian vine is there, the shade of oak-trees or pine, the couch, softer than sleep, made by ferns or moss; the 'music of water falling from the high face of the rock,' the arbutus shrubs, with their bright red berries, above the sea-cliffs, whence the shepherds watch the tunny-fishers on the sea below, while the sailors' song floats up to them;

and if the form given to the strains of shepherd and goatherd is such as finished poetry demands, this is a very different thing from the affectation of the mock pastoral, as it existed, for instance, at the court of Louis XIV. The modern love-songs of Greek shepherds warrant the supposition that their ancient prototypes commanded some elegance of expression; and whatever may be the degree in which Theocritus has idealised his Sicilian peasants, at any rate we hear the voice and breathe the air of nature. His twenty-first idyl is a dialogue between two old fishermen, who wake before daylight in their wattled cabin on the Sicilian coast. One of them tells the other a dream that he has just had; he had caught a golden fish, and had vowed that he would give up his hard calling. His comrade advises him to go on with his work, for dreams of gold will not feed him. Of this idyl Mr Lang truly says, 'There is nothing in Wordsworth more real, more full of the incommunicable sense of nature, rounding and softening the toilsome days of the aged and the poor. It is as true to nature as the statue of the naked fisherman in the Vatican. One cannot read these verses but the vision returns to one, of sandhills of the sea, of a low cabin roofed with grass, where fishing-rods of reed are leaning against the door, while the Mediterranean floats

up her waves that fill the waste with sound. This nature, gray and still, seems in harmony with the wise content of old men whose days are waning on the limit of life, as they have all been spent by the desolate margin of the sea.' But the idyls of Theocritus are not all rural ; and he too, when he handled epic material, had to write in the Alexandrian manner ; as in his hymn to the Dioscuri, and his two idyls on Heracles, the serpent-strangler and the lion-slayer. The general Alexandrian character is seen in the adaptation of the subjects to a small framework, the avoidance of the large epic style, the prettiness of detail given by a number of pictorial touches. It is a significant fact that Theocritus, the last genuinely inspired poet of Hellas, draws his true inspiration, not from civic but from rural life, and is least Hellenic, in the old sense, just when he is most in accord with the taste of the great city in which he dwelt.


In the Alexandrian age, with all its close study and imitation of the classical models, nothing is more remarkable than the absence of any promise that the Hellenic spirit which animated those masterpieces was destined to have any abiding influence in the world. If that spirit was already so languid or almost dead in Greek-speaking men so familiar

The Greek
influence on
Rome.

with its works, how could it be expected that aliens in blood and in language, aliens further removed from the great days of Greece not merely in time but in all the conditions of their lives, should prove more appreciative disciples, or more faithful guardians, of the Hellenic tradition? And yet it is true that the vital power of the Hellenic genius was not fully revealed, until, after suffering some temporary eclipse in the superficially Greek civilizations of Asia and Egypt, it emerged in a new quality, as a source of illumination to the literature and the art of Rome. Early Roman literature was indebted to Greece for the greater part of its material; but a more important debt was in respect to the forms and moulds of composition. The Latin language of the third century B.C. was already in full possession of the qualities which always remained distinctive of it; it was clear, strong, weighty, precise, a language made to be spoken in the imperative mood, a fitting interpreter of government and law. But it was not flexible or graceful, musical or rapid; it was not suited to express delicate shades of thought or feeling; for literary purposes, it was, in comparison with Greek, a poor and rude idiom. The development of Latin into the language of Cicero and Virgil was gradually and laboriously accom-

plished under the constant influence of Greece. That finish of form, known as classical, which Roman writers share with Greek, was a lesson which Greece slowly impressed upon Rome. The Roman character was far too distinctive and too vigorous to be merged in any foreign influence. A peculiarity of the Roman mind was indeed its capacity to receive new impressions, and to assimilate foreign influences, without losing its own powerful individuality. On the other hand, a close and prolonged study of the Greek models could not end in a mere discipline of form; the beauty of the best Greek models depends too much on their vital spirit. Not only was the Roman imagination enriched, but the Roman intellect, through literary intercourse with the Greek, gradually acquired a flexibility and a plastic power which had not been among its original gifts. Through Roman literature the Greek influence was transmitted to later times in a shape which obscured, indeed, much of its charm, but which was also fitted to extend its empire, and to win an entrance for it in regions which would have been less accessible to a purer form of its manifestation.

In the earlier period of the Renaissance the scholars of Italy, where the revival had its chief



seat, were engrossed with Latin literature; they regarded it as their Italian heritage, restored to them after long deprivation.

The Renaissance—predominantly Latin.

Greek studies, though ardently pursued by a few, remained, on the whole, in the background. And it may be said that the general spirit of the classical revival continued to be Latin rather than Greek down to the latter part of the last century. Even where Greek scholarship was most cultivated, there was comparatively little sense of what is characteristic and distinctive in

the best Greek literature. This sense was developed, in the second half of the eighteenth century, chiefly through two agencies. One was the study of Greek art, as advanced by such men as Winckelmann and Lessing, bringing with it the perception that the qualities characteristic of the best Greek art are also present in the best Greek literature. The other agency was the reaction against the conventional classicism, wearing a Latin garb, which had so long been in vogue. Minds insurgent against that tyranny turned with joyous relief to the elastic freedom of the Greek intellect, to the living charm of Greek poetry and Greek art. Goethe and Schiller are representatives of the new impulse. The great gain of the movement

Hellenic reaction of 18th century.

which then began was that, for the first time since the Revival of letters, the Greek originals stood out distinct from the Latin copies; men acquired a truer sense of the Hellenic genius, and the current of Hellenic influence upon modern life began to flow in a clear channel of its own, no longer confused with the somewhat turbid stream of Renaissance classicism.

Meanwhile, however, literature and art had experienced the influence of other forces, acting in very different ways; and with these forces the Hellenic influence had to reckon. One of these was the product of mediaeval Catholicism, which had given art a new genius. A new world of beauty had arisen, even more different from the pagan world than the Empire of the twelfth century was different from that of the first. Greek art had sprung from a free, cheerful life, open to all the bright impressions of external nature, a life warmed by frank human sympathies, and lit up with fancy controlled by reason. The lawgivers of mediaeval art were men withdrawn from communion with the outward world by the rapture of a devotion at once half-mystic and intensely real; instead of flexible intelligence, they had religious passion; instead of the Greek's clear and steady outlook

Influences
competing
with the
Hellenic.

Mediaeval
art.


upon the facts of humanity, they had a faith which transfigured the actual world, which adjusted every relation of life by its own canons, which, indeed, made itself the standard by which the impressions of the senses were to be judged. The Greek artist, even in portraying passion, was mindful of balance, and placed certain limits on the expression of individual character; the mediaeval artist strove before all things to express the intensity of the individual soul. In poetry Dante is the great exponent of this spirit, and mediaeval Catholicism deeply coloured the sentiment of all the literature known by the general name of romantic.

Classical and
Romantic
Schools.

In Goethe's younger days the conflict between the Classical and the Romantic schools raged fiercely. The interlude of Helena,

Goethe. which forms the third act in the second part of Faust, was the work of his old age (1830). Faust's nature is to be elevated and purified by developing in him the sense of beauty; Helena represents the classical, but especially the Greek, element in art and literature; and when Faust at last wins her, their union typifies the reconciliation of the Romantic with the Classical. Goethe himself, as one of his critics says, dated a new life, a complete mental regeneration, from the time when he first seized the true

spirit of the ancient masters. In his own words, speaking of Greek art and literature: 'Clearness of vision, cheerfulness of acceptance, easy grace of expression, are the qualities which delight us; and now, when we affirm that we find all these in the genuine Grecian works, achieved in the noblest material, the best-proportioned form, the allegorical strain which pervades the Helena, shall be understood if we always refer to them as a basis and a standard. Let each one be a Grecian in his own way; but let him *be* one.' In the allegorical strain which pervades the Helena, Goethe has not failed to mark that, while the Hellenic idea of beauty is supreme, the Romantic element has also enriched modern life. The gifts are not all from one side. The symmetry, the clear outlines, the cheerful repose of Classical art, are 'wedded to the sentiment, passion, and variety of the Romantic. The great German poet felt, and has expressed with wonderful subtlety, the truth that no modern can absolutely dissociate the Hellenic influence from the others which have contributed to shape modern life; no one can now be a pure Hellene, nor, if he could, would it be desirable; but every one should recognize the special elements with which the Hellenic ideal can ennoble and chasten the modern spirit, and these he should by all means cultivate.



To do so successfully is to educate one's sense of beauty; and to do that aright is to raise and purify one's whole nature.

This great lesson, taught half-mystically in the second part of Faust, is apt to be obscured by a contrast much deeper than any that ever existed between the Romantic and the Classical schools,—one of which Goethe took little account, since it did not much concern him,—the contrast between Hellenism and Hebraism. As Mr Matthew Arnold says in 'Culture and Anarchy,' the governing idea of Hellenism is spontaneity of consciousness; that of Hebraism is strictness of conscience. Both seek, in the Hebrew Apostle's words, to make us partakers of the divine nature; but Hellenism seeks to do this through the reason, by making us see things as they are; Hebraism insists rather on conduct and obedience. The Renaissance was a movement away from mediaeval Catholicism in the direction of Hellenism; the Reformation was a movement in the direction of Hebraism. In countries where the Reformation took strongest hold, and, owing to the qualities of our race, more especially in England, the intellectual influence of the Renaissance was crossed, and for a time checked, by the Hebraizing tendency. The Puritan

Hellenism
and He-
braism.

conception of righteousness, with all its moral nobleness, was at that moment adverse to the acquisition of the best things which the Hellenic influence had to bestow ; and in this sense it could be said, with a melancholy truth, that the English 'entered the prison of Puritanism and had the key turned upon their spirit there for two hundred years.'

But though there is a profound difference, there is no necessary antagonism, between the ideal broadly described as Hebraic, and the permanent, or essential, parts of Hellenism. The Greek element in alliance with others. The Greek influence has acted upon modern life and literature even more widely as a pervading and quickening spirit than as an exemplar of form ; and it has shown itself capable of co-operating, in this subtle manner, with various alien forces so as neither to lose its own distinction nor to infringe upon theirs.

In respect to Hebraism, Milton illustrates this. By temperament no less than creed, Milton was a Puritan of the higher type. Milton. He had an austere belief in his own mission to be for England a prophet, a mouthpiece of moral teaching and moral warning, just as he believed and said, that the English nation was, in the Hebrew sense, a chosen people. He was also steeped

in classical culture. In an age of classicism which, outside of Italy, was usually superficial, he was the first Englishman who had joined a thorough appreciation of the classical literature (especially Latin) to a first-rate original genius for poetry. I do not forget Ben Jonson, at once scholar and poet; but in neither quality was he Milton's equal. How, then, is the Hellenic influence seen in Milton? It cannot be said to have determined the pervading spirit of his work; that is rather Hebraic, or, when it is not Hebraic, Latin. The *Lycidas*, for instance, is a pastoral elegy on the Alexandrian model; but how strangely is the temper of the Greek original changed when the English poet blazes forth in Puritan indignation against the corruptions of the church! The poet himself shows his consciousness of this in reverting from the digression to his theme:—

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams—return, Sicilian Muse!

The *Samson Agonistes* has the form of a Greek drama, but its inspiration, like its subject, is far more Hebraic than Hellenic; it concerns the mysterious dealing of Jehovah with His servant; it is full of questionings and strivings like those of Job, followed by such a triumph as rings through the song of Miriam or of Deborah. Yet no one

familiar with the best Greek poetry can read Milton without feeling what its influence has contributed to his genius ; it has helped to give him his lofty self-restraint and his serenity.

Another modern poet, who illustrates the co-operation of the Greek influence with foreign influences, is Keats. Unlike Mil-
Keats.
 ton, Keats knew Greek literature only through such scraps as he might find in classical dictionaries, or, at most, through translation, as he knew Homer through Chapman. His grasp of Hellenic things unavoidably lacks that sureness which is found, for instance, in Landor, who, besides being much of a Greek in feeling, had also an intimate familiarity with Greek literature ; on the other hand, Keats had a native sympathy with the spirit of Greek mythology ; and even a Landor could not achieve what Keats sometimes reaches by flashes of insight. The Greek element is, however, only one of those which are present in the poetry of Keats. The romantic element was not less vital in it ; St Agnes' Eve is not less characteristic than the Ode on a Grecian Urn. And his manner, even in treating Greek subjects, was not Greek, except occasionally, and for brief spaces. His style had not the harmonious and lucid simplicity of the best Greek style, which gives clear outlines

to the central thought, dispensing with all ornament which might confuse or obscure it. Keats, like the Elizabethan poets, delighted in a luxuriance of decorative detail; his style is essentially romantic. In *Hyperion*, for instance, the description of the god's palace,

Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,

is throughout rather romantic in its splendours and its mystery than truly Hellenic. So also is this passage of *Endymion*, beautiful in itself, but charged with imagery of an Elizabethan type, and lacking Hellenic simplicity:—

As when, upon a tranced summer night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir.

But in one quality of his genius Keats was truly a Greek,—namely, in his vivid, spontaneous sympathy with the life of external nature. Take, for example, his *Ode to a Nightingale*; there we see the joy in nature for nature's own sake, penetrated by a feeling which is truly Hellenic; not with the feeling of Shelley, that the visible world is but the veil of the unseen. Like a Greek, too, Keats loved to embody the powers of nature in human shapes of more than human loveliness,—unlike Wordsworth, to whom the influences of nature

were emanations, not persons, and whose joy in nature was also inseparable from those aspirations of his own mind which he read into the scenes around him :—

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality:
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.

The natural affinity of Keats with the Greek mind is curiously illustrated by a letter to a friend, in which he argues against distrust of the imagination as a guide to truth, saying, in effect, that, when a beautiful vision rises before the imagination, it is the imperfect reflex of a divine prototype, which will be seen hereafter. Keats had not read Plato, and yet here is the tendency which received a more scientific expression in the theory of ideas. When the poetry of Keats was described as 'the wail and remonstrance of a disinherited paganism,' the criticism was singularly unjust. A strain of imaginative regret there indeed is in him, when he thinks of what has gone out of the world with the inspirations of the ancient poetry :—

Glory and loveliness have passed away.

But his regret was for the beauty, not for the paganism ; and no one felt more finely the sense

in which the spiritual existence of that beauty has been prolonged :—

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on ;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.

Other poets there have been, and are, who have consciously sought, and sometimes with exquisite results, to blend the Hellenic grace with a romantic colouring ; as in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnets on Greek subjects the language has a Greek clearness, lightness, and finish, while the spirit is rather that of the Italian middle age : or as Mr William Morris clothes Greek stories in a mediæval garb. Thus his Jason derives a peculiar charm from the mediæval traits. When the Argonaut heroes move through the streets of Iolcus to embark, bells are ringing in the town, and ladies shower roses

From windows glorious with the well-wrought hem
Of many a purple cloth.

It is as if the poet were singing in the latter part of the middle age, when its enchantments were about to pass away before a clearer illumination : like the wreaths on the helmets of the Argonauts, the poet's fancies seem

wet

With beaded dew of the scarce-vanished night.

The distinction of such poetical work is the use of romance to bring Hellenism into relief; the inner contrast between the romantic and the Hellenic spirit is rather hinted than expressed.

But the deepest and largest influence of Greece is not to be sought in the modern poetry which treats Greek subjects and imitates Greek form; that influence works more characteristically when, having been received into the modern mind, it acts by suggestion and inspiration, breathing a grace and a power of its own into material and form of a different origin :—

totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat molem, et magno se in corpore miscet.

This influence has been all-pervading in modern life, in modern literature and art.

Yet those who most appreciate the true value of Hellenism will never claim for it that, by itself, it can suffice for the needs of modern humanity. In the intellectual province its value is not only permanent, but unique; it has furnished models of excellence which can never be superseded; by its spirit, it supplies a medicine for diseases of the modern mind, a corrective for aberrations of modern taste, a discipline, no less than a delight, for the modern imagination; since that obedience to reason which

Value of
Hellenism
for us;

it exacts is also a return to the most gracious activities of life and nature. Of such a power, we may truly say,

it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower of quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing.

But in the province of religion and morals
and the limit thereto. Hellenism alone is not sufficing. Greek polytheism, even as ennobled by the great poets, was incapable of generating religious conceptions which could satisfy the mind and heart, or of furnishing an adequate rule for the conduct of life. These must be sought from another source.

Yet there is no inherent conflict between true
Healthy character of the best Greek work. Hellenism and spiritualized Hebraism, such Hebraism as has passed into Christianity. Such a notion could be entertained only where the apprehension of Hellenism itself was superficial or defective. There has, indeed, been some poetry in which the direct imitation of Greek form has been associated with unhealthy tendencies; there have been transient vagaries of modern fashion which have seemed to assume that Hellenism is to be found, as has been neatly said, in eccentricity tinged with vice. But the distinctive quality of the best Greek poetry

and art, that by which it has lived and will live, is the faculty of rising from the earth, from a soil which nourishes weeds along with flowers, into a clearer air. 'The divine,' says Plato in the *Phaedrus*, 'is beauty, wisdom, goodness, and the like; by these the wing of the soul is nourished, and grows apace; but when fed upon evil and foulness and the like, wastes and falls away.' Greek poetry, in its noblest forms, was indeed the *πτεροῦ δύναμις*, 'the power of the wing,' for the human soul; the visions to which it soared were such as that described in the *Phaedrus*, where beauty is beheld dwelling with *σωφροσύνη*, modesty, in a holy place, as in a shrine; and in the emotion which this divine beauty stirs, love is blended with reverent adoration. The spirit of the highest Greek poetry, as of the best Greek art, is essentially pure; to conceive it as necessarily entangled with the baser elements of paganism is to confound the accidents with the essence; the accidents have passed away; the essence is imperishable. Nor is it purity alone that can be claimed for such Greek poetry; it is capable of acting as an intellectual tonic, and of bracing us for the battle of life. There is truth in the words with which Mr Gladstone concludes his *Studies on Homer*:—

'To pass from the study of Homer to the busi-



ness of the world is to step out of a palace of enchantment into the cold, gray light of a polar day. But the spells in which this enchanter deals have no affinity with that drug from Egypt which drowns the spirit in effeminate indifference; rather they are like the *φάρμακον ἐσθλόν*, the remedial specific, which, freshening the understanding by contact with the truth and strength of nature, should both improve its vigilance against deceit and danger, and increase its vigour and resolution for the discharge of duty.'

A like tribute might be paid, with not less justice, to the classical Greek poetry as a whole. True to Aristotle's principle for art, this poetry deals with the universal,—with those elements of human character and life which are not transient or abnormal, but of interest for every age and every land. What Mr Lowell said of the ancient classical literature generally applies especially to the Greek: 'It is as contemporary with to-day as with the ears it first enraptured; for it appeals not to the man of then or now, but to the entire round of human nature itself. . . . We know not whither other studies will lead us, especially if dissociated from this; we do know to what summits, far above our lower region of turmoil, this has led, and what the many-sided outlook thence.'

The claims of classical Greek poetry to a permanent hold upon the attention of the civilized world are of two kinds, intrinsic and historical. Viewed in regard to its intrinsic qualities, this poetry is the creation of a people in whom the gifts of the artists were more harmoniously united than in any other race; it bears the impress of their mind in the perfection of its form; it is also the spontaneous and profoundly suggestive expression of their life and thought. Viewed historically, this poetry is the fountain-head of poetical tradition in Europe; it has supplied the typical standards of form, it has also furnished a varied wealth of material and illustration; even where it has not given a direct model, it has operated by the subtle diffusion of an animating spirit; it has become blended with various other influences of later origin, and to every such alliance it has contributed some intellectual distinction which no other element could have supplied. So far from being adverse to those religious and ethical influences which are beyond the compass of its own gift to modern life, it is, rightly understood, in concord with them, inasmuch as it tends to elevate and to refine the human spirit by the contemplation of beauty

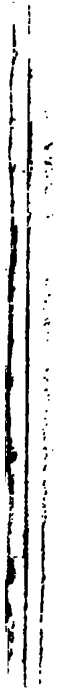
Conclusion :
the enduring
claims of
Greek
poetry.

in its noblest and purest form. On the high places of Greek literature, those who are worn with the troubles or disturbed by the mental maladies of modern civilization can breathe an atmosphere which, like that of Greece itself, has the freshness of the mountains and the sea. But the loneliness of Oeta or Cithaeron is not there ; we have around us, on those summits, also the cheerful sympathies of human life, the pleasant greetings of the kindly human voice. The great poets of ancient Hellas recall to one's mind the words in which Aeschylus described the kinsmen of Niobe who worshipped their ancestral deity on the mountain-heights of Mysia :—

the seed of gods,
Men near to Zeus ; for whom on Ida burns,
High in clear air, the altar of their Sire,
Nor hath their race yet lost the blood divine.

Humanity cannot afford to lose out of its inheritance any part of the best work which has been done for it in the past. All that is most beautiful and most instructive in Greek achievement is our permanent possession ; one which can be enjoyed without detriment to those other studies which modern life demands ; one which no lapse of time can make obsolete, and which no multiplication of modern interests can make

superfluous. Each successive generation must learn from ancient Greece that which can be taught by her alone ; and to assist, however little, in the transmission of her message is the best reward of a student.



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